

GENERAL SYNOD

Anglican – Methodist Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group¹
Annual Report

Introduction

1. The Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group (JCAMG)² continues its work guided, we believe, by the Holy Spirit, with the purpose of helping both our churches to grow deeper into the covenant relationship we share under God and to express more fully our commitment to mission and unity for the sake of God's kingdom. The Group is approaching its work positively and prayerfully in a spirit of honesty and sober confidence: we think that it is vital to take seriously the realities of the ecumenical climate in both our churches; at the same time, we rejoice that the power at work within us is able to accomplish far more than all we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).
2. The JCAMG recognises that for our two churches to move forward in covenant a number of developments are necessary, each of which requires courage and imagination and none of which is sufficient on its own. To recall the titles of the other reports of the Joint Implementation Commission, it is necessary for more of us to live and embrace the covenant, respond to its challenge, and relate to and work with each other in the spirit of the covenant; emotional commitment is a significant aspect of a relationship. Both our churches need to adopt an ecumenical humility that, following the approach of receptive ecumenism, encourages the reception of insights and gifts from the other.
3. Some people will want to ask, why should growing into deeper unity between our churches be a priority for us – will it make a significant difference to how our churches rise to the challenges of mission, numerical growth, growing disciples and evangelism which we share with all churches of this country? They will want us to point to the evidence that make us claim that indeed mission is enhanced as we grow in unity. To do that we present here two examples that demonstrate what is already being achieved to renew the Church by Anglicans and Methodists working together.

Example 1**A county wide Ecumenical Vision in Cumbria**

God for All builds on the prayers, planning and work completed across churches in Cumbria over the past five years, emphasising mission at the heart of what the churches are doing. It is the ecumenical banner which describes the vision for helping everyone in Cumbria discover more of God and God's purpose for their lives. It brings together the different facets of each denomination's commitment to grow disciples and draws on existing partnerships between the Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed churches. To hear the Bishop of Penrith speak about this vision go to: [Videos | The Diocese of Carlisle](http://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/our-faith/videos/god-for-all.html) [http://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/our-faith/videos/god-for-all.html]. This Vision has a **multi-faceted ecumenical strategy**.

An Ecumenical Strategy for Discipleship and the Evangelisation of Cumbria

Discipleship is a priority. The churches are working at being people who grow in faithfulness and holiness, in our own discipleship; and also at being churches which grow new disciples. A crucial part of the evangelism strategy is 'Reach' – a variety of approaches to encourage individual Christians and ordinary churches to be part of the

¹In addition to this brief written report, the JCAMG is preparing a presentation for the Methodist Conference.

² The Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group was established and given its mandate by the General Synod and Methodist Conference in 2014, in response to the final report of the Joint Implementation Commission *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness* GS 1971
<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2101244/gs%201971%20-%20the%20anglican-methodist%20covenant%20report%20from%20the%20joint%20implementation%20commission.pdf>

evangelisation of Cumbria. A variety of approaches and initiatives are needed if we are going to help the variety of people in Cumbria explore and connect with the reality of God's love and truth.

An Ecumenical Strategy for Ministry in Cumbria

The strategy for ministry calls for the establishing of **mission communities** across the Diocese of Carlisle, the Cumbria Methodist District and the United Reformed Church in Cumbria. The proposal for Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas, originating with the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission, and presented in *Moving Forward in Covenant* is enabling ministry to be shared across the three denominations in mission communities. The first of 40 mission communities has now been established in the north of the county. To hear testimony about this and the promise held out for the future go to: [Videos | The Diocese of Carlisle](http://www.carlislediocese.org.uk/our-faith/videos/first-commissioning-service-for-a-cumbrian-mission-community.html)
[<http://www.carlislediocese.org.uk/our-faith/videos/first-commissioning-service-for-a-cumbrian-mission-community.html>]

An ecumenical buildings strategy for Cumbria

This is a crucial aspect of creating a 'Christ-centred, caring church for and in the community using sustainable buildings appropriately located to serve present and future mission'. The churches are committed to continue the work of developing strategies to optimise the use of church buildings for the benefit of communities throughout the county.

Example 2

The Retford Area Team Ministry

Methodists and Anglicans working together in a *Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area (CPEA)* in North Nottinghamshire

Introduction

The Retford Area Team Ministry in North Nottinghamshire serves 25 Church of England parishes with 28 churches, and 4 local Methodist churches within the Retford Area of Trinity Methodist circuit, comprising a population of 33,000 people across about 100 square miles. The area is served by 4 full-time ordained Anglicans, who are also associate presbyters in the Methodist Circuit, the Methodist Superintendent, two stipendiary lay ministers (one full-time and the other half-time), one non-stipendiary part-time curate, and one ordained Anglican who has 'authorised to serve' status in the Methodist Church. The area as a whole was set up as a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area in 2012.

Working together

Over the past 9 years Anglicans and Methodists have increasingly worked together.

- All the Church of England services are included in the quarterly Circuit Plan. We fill one another's gaps.
- An annual joint service gives a chance to celebrate the progress we are making together.
- Marriage Preparation and Baptism Preparation are carried out together for all couples and families, Anglican and Methodist.
- Training of lay people is likewise carried out together, e.g. for pastoral care, worship leaders, safeguarding etc.
- All decisions about deployment of ministers are made after consultation, and each denomination is represented at the interviewing of new ministers.
- Mission strategies are agreed together – e.g. the work of the Missioner to Schools and Young People, co-ordinating of all the Messy Churches etc.
- The Superintendent Minister (Revd Peter Sheasby) is now Minister in Charge of two Anglican parishes which are in a single congregation LEP with one Methodist Chapel. The only thing he cannot do is take C of E Weddings.

Teresa Abel is employed part-time by the Methodist Church as Lay Pastoral Worker in the Retford area of Trinity Circuit, in the Sheffield District. Her work is chiefly in three Methodist/Anglican LEPs and three Methodist churches.

Teresa's role is an enabling role which has involved the setting up, training and overseeing of pastoral teams in local churches. She worked closely with an Anglican colleague to establish and train a pastoral care team in the Church in the Leverton's (a local ecumenical partnership) following the traditional Methodist pattern (i.e. each team member having pastoral oversight of a group of people drawn from the list of worshippers and others with close links to the church). This has acted as a model for other places, both within the area and beyond. The minister, Rev Mark Cantrill, has been a proponent of this, maintaining that structured pastoral care is one of the great strengths of the Methodist tradition. In working together in this way closer links have been formed between leaders and individuals in local churches and the importance of good quality pastoral care has been highlighted.

The Revd Mark Cantrill is an ordained Anglican who is authorised to serve in the Methodist Church. The Methodist congregation has been greatly enhanced by the variety and richness introduced by Mark. Worship has been enriched by a more liturgical approach and greater use of symbolism. Having Mark as the minister has encouraged the congregation to think more ecumenically and see beyond denominational differences.

Since 2012 the CPEA has both legitimised some of the things which were already being done together which were pushing at the bounds of legality, and given new rights which were not there before. Tony Walker, Team Rector of the Retford Area Team has said:

"As we have worked together over the years we have built up the trust and confidence to go further. It has helped that key lay people in both denominations and some of the ordained clergy have been around for a long time and are able to hold both the history of the past and the vision for the future. We are inspired by one important sentence from the document '*Moving Forward in Covenant*' (2011 – paragraph 56). "While this development [CPEA] falls short of the interchangeability of ordained ministries, it will enable us to go further in fulfilling the spirit of the Covenant – *by acting as one until we are one* – on the ground by providing for a greatly enhanced form of shared ministry." We look forward to the central structures of our denominations enabling the full interchangeability of ministries to happen, sooner rather than later – for the sake of the life and mission of the whole Church."

4. These two examples show that life giving partnerships can breathe new life into the mission of our churches. Our strategic planning can be strengthened; in relationship with a critical friend we become more intentional in what we do; our scarce resources can be maximised and most importantly we can give each other confidence to grow in discipleship. And all this is being done and being planned, not only in Cumbria and Retford, but in many other areas where the people of our churches have learnt to trust and value each other.
5. In April, the Co-Chairs and Co-Secretaries of the Group met with the Co-Chairs of the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM). MAPUM continues to fulfil its key role: to support and advise our churches at local and regional level to give priority to making full use of what is already possible for them to do together, and especially in encouraging them to plan together for mission and worship, deployment of ministry and the use of resources. The two examples are just two of the areas which the work of MAPUM has encouraged.
6. The snag faced by these examples and other places is that it involves working within and around our churches' present regulations, especially in connection with ministry. The proposals to be brought forward by the faith and order bodies of our two churches are intended to unlock the potential that we see already emerging and to make a difference to the life and mission of our churches. Therefore, the proposals need to be set in the wider context of the shared life and vision of our churches.

Unlocking Ministry

7. In 2014, the annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Great Britain and the November sessions of the General Synod of the Church of England approved the three major recommendations of the final report of the Joint Implementation Commission on the Anglican – Methodist Covenant (JIC), *The Challenge of the Covenant*. One of these was:
that the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church work together to bring forward proposals for

- i. the Methodist Church to consider afresh expressing the Conference's ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry and the Church of England to recognise that ministry in the Methodist Church as a sign of continuity in faith, worship and mission in a church that is in the apostolic succession
 - ii. the Church of England and the Methodist Church to address the question of reconciling, with integrity, the existing presbyteral and diaconal ministries of our two churches, which would lead to the interchangeability of ministries.
8. The formal resolutions that were passed with overwhelming support by both bodies included clauses referring specifically to the work needed to implement this resolution.
9. The Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church set up a joint subgroup that has been meeting since July 2015 to formulate the proposals requested by the resolutions. Its report exists in initial draft form and is expected to be signed off by the two faith and order bodies in the autumn, so that discussion of its content can begin more widely in the two churches.
10. The JCAMG has been encouraging this process. In December 2015, the Co-Chairs and Co-Secretaries of the JCAMG met with officers of the faith and order bodies of our two churches and the Co-Chairs of the Joint Subgroup on Ministry and Oversight appointed by those bodies. We are delighted that the Joint Subgroup is making good progress with its tasks. A further joint meeting of the faith and order bodies has been arranged for September 2016; it is expected then to consider a first draft of the proposals.
11. Careful consideration will need to be given to the emerging proposals by Synod and Conference, in light of the 2014 resolutions. Their acceptance would involve reception of the historic episcopate by the Methodist Church and its commitment in the future to episcopal ordination for all ordained ministers, and arrangements to be made for eligibility of all those ordained as presbyters in the Methodist Church to serve in the Church of England, including those ordained prior to the reception of the historic episcopate. These changes would need the highest level of scrutiny in both churches, because they would represent a historic transformation in the relationship between them and a remarkable and far-reaching act of reconciliation. They would also, crucially, open up new possibilities for partnership in mission at local level, with Methodist presbyters and Anglican priests being able where it is agreed to be beneficial to exercise their ministry in the other church as well as their own, and to lead their congregations in sharing resources for the sake of the common goals of evangelism, discipleship and serving the community.
12. The JCAMG sees its task of advocacy as helping people in our churches to engage with these proposals when they are made public and on the other hand to set them in the wider context of and opportunity for mission. To this end we are working with our colleagues in MAPUM to develop a proposal for a network of Covenant Champions to help with this task.

Covenant Champions

13. The JCAMG cannot fulfil the task of advocacy on its own so it proposes to establish a supporting network of 'Covenant Champions', who will assist in this task at district and diocesan level. Their task will be twofold:
 - i. to champion and communicate within the dioceses and districts proposals about episcopacy and reconciliation of ministries in the successive stages of the synodical and conference processes (for example by setting up meetings, encouraging sufficient time to be included in synodical agendas for good discussion of proposals), and
 - ii. to communicate news about initiatives at national level in order to enthuse others within the dioceses and districts and to gather and share good stories of Anglican –

Methodist joint working within dioceses and districts to share widely (for example, through an updated Covenant website and e-newsletter).

14. The aim is to identify champions to cover dioceses and districts on a regional basis, and to hold the first induction event by the end of this year.

The Rt Revd Paul Bayes
Bishop of Liverpool and
Anglican Co-Chair of the Anglican-Methodist Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group

June 2016

The mandate and membership of the Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group

The 2014 Methodist Conference and the General Synod (in November 2014) approved the three main recommendations of the final report of the Joint Implementation Commission, ‘The Challenge of the Covenant’, namely:

- i. that the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church work together to bring forward proposals for:
 - i. the Methodist Church to consider afresh expressing the Conference’s ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry and the Church of England to recognise that ministry in the Methodist Church as a sign of continuity in faith, worship and mission in a church that is in the apostolic succession;
 - ii. the Church of England and the Methodist Church to address the question of reconciling, with integrity, the existing presbyteral and diaconal ministries of our two churches, which would lead to the interchangeability of ministries.
- ii. that our churches at local and regional level, supported and advised by the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission, give priority to making full use of what is already possible for them to do together, and especially to plan together for mission and worship, deployment of ministry and the use of resources.
- iii. that a Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group, co-chaired by a President or Vice-President of the Methodist Conference and a Diocesan Bishop and including two other Methodist and two other Anglican members should be established, with access to the key policy making bodies of our churches, to replace the Joint Implementation Commission in the next quinquennium. This body will monitor progress of faith and order conversations and other on-going work under the Covenant and advocate new initiatives; facilitate communication of Anglican–Methodist developments in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and report annually to the General Synod and Methodist Conference.

Membership

As reported in the summer of 2015, the Methodist Council and the Appointments Committee of the General Synod appointed the Co-Chairs and other members of the Group in the March and April of that year. Both bodies have had to make further appointments and the membership of the Group is now as follows:

- Co-Chairs: The Rt Revd Paul Bayes (Bishop of Liverpool) and Mr David Walton (Vice-President of the Conference 2008-09)
- Church of England Members: The Revd Dr Mike Booker and Mrs Margaret Swinson
- Methodist Members: The Revd Dr Caroline Wickens and The Revd Michaela Youngson
- The Co-Secretaries of the Group are the Revd Dr Roger Paul (National Ecumenical Officer, Council for Christian Unity) and the Revd Neil Stubbens (Connexional Ecumenical Officer).