

# **MOVING FORWARD IN COVENANT**

**Interim Report (2011) of the  
Joint Implementation Commission (Phase 2)  
under the Covenant between**

**The Methodist Church of Great Britain  
and  
The Church of England**

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## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>Part 1:</b>	<b>HOW FAR HAVE WE TRAVELLED IN COVENANT?</b>	<b>4-25</b>
	How did we get here?	4
	What have our Churches aid to each other in the Covenant?	7
	Poised to move forward in Covenant	9
	The diaconate	12
	Causes for concern	13
	Episcopacy and the two churches	15
	Presidency and the Conference	18
	A major new initiative under the Covenant	22
<b>Part 2:</b>	<b>A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN SHARED MINISTRY</b>	<b>26-41</b>
	Summary	26
	Shared Ministry in the Context of the Covenant	27
	Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas	28
	The Canonical Basis for Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas	31
	The Area of Local Ecumenical Partnership	32
	The Bishop's Authorisation for Shared Ministry	33
	The Methodist Response	34
	Establishing a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area	37
	What does this proposal achieve?	40
	Moving Forward Together	41
<b>Appendix 1:</b>	<b>CONFERRING ABOUT THE DIACONATE</b>	<b>42-50</b>
<b>Appendix 2:</b>	<b>METHODIST AND ANGLICAN RESPONSES TO THE JIC QUINQUENNIAL REPORT <i>EMBRACING THE COVENANT</i></b>	<b>51-58</b>
<b>Appendix 3:</b>	<b>MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION</b>	<b>59</b>

**AN ANGLICAN-METHODIST COVENANT  
JOINT IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION, PHASE 2, 2008-13**

***MOVING FORWARD IN COVENANT*  
INTERIM REPORT 2008-11**

1. The year 2011 marks a small milestone in the history of recent relations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain. It is ten years since the Formal Conversations that had been set up by the Methodist Conference and the General Synod concluded their work and offered their report *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* to those bodies. The Covenant gathered up unity initiatives that were already going on and gave them a sound theological basis in mutual ecclesial recognition. As a solemn mutual commitment it also laid the foundation for a process that is intended to lead beyond the covenantal relationship to full visible communion between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain.
  
2. After a process of consultation throughout both churches, the report was debated in Conference and Synod in June-July 2003 and overwhelmingly endorsed. The Covenant was signed in the presence of HM The Queen at a ceremony in Methodist Central Hall Westminster and celebrated in a service at Westminster Abbey, again in the presence of The Queen, on 1 November 2003. But it is worth looking further back to the events that eventually led to this remarkable expression of reconciliation and unity and on how far we have already travelled together before we focus, in Part 2, on a major initiative designed to move the implementation of the Covenant further forward.

**PART 1: HOW FAR HAVE WE TRAVELLED IN COVENANT?**

**How did we get here?**

3. Methodism developed within the Church of England as a movement of spiritual renewal and evangelisation and was an aspect of the great eighteenth-century revival. The first leaders of Methodism, John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield,

were all Church of England clergymen. Methodists typically continued to worship in their parish churches while also gathering in their class meetings and for preaching services where they gathered round the word of God at other times. John Wesley became impatient with the legal constraints of the Church of England and its parish structure, when he perceived them to be responding insufficiently quickly or flexibly to meet the demands of mission in a changing world. Eventually he took it upon himself to ordain ‘superintendents’ for the oversight of Methodists in America (who rapidly became known as ‘bishops’) and to ensure that the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper were ‘duly administered’ there, having failed to persuade the Bishop of London to do so in the aftermath of the American War of Independence. He did so as a priest not a bishop, following scholarly accounts of the early Church which stated that presbyters and bishops were essentially one order of ministry in their origins, and that a presbyter could therefore act with legitimate authority in these matters where a bishop could not act. He saw himself as under obedience not to use such powers in England, where there was not the same missionary imperative to act as there was in America, and where there were bishops who could act should such need emerge. But the act of ordaining was deplored by his brother Charles who argued that it was the first step on a slippery slope that would inevitably lead to pressure to do the same in England, and who strove to hold the energies of the Methodist movement within the established Church.

4. It has been said that Methodism became a separate church more by accident than design, though that is perhaps not the whole truth: it was partly a result of missionary zeal. It is also the case that Methodism began to become a separate church overseas sooner and more quickly than it did in England. But even in England by the end of the eighteenth century John Wesley had created structures to perpetuate his work and to ensure that the Methodist movement continued to expand in a way that partly overlapped and partly paralleled the Church of England. This movement for spiritual renewal and evangelisation allied to an emphasis on personal and social holiness and mission reached out to those outside it. It absorbed members from historic Dissent and provided a

home for many whose contact with the established Church had been minimal. The reaction among many Methodists against ritualism in the nineteenth-century Church of England widened the gap.

5. Yet as Methodism began to become separate, it also began to fissure and fracture. A missionary movement began to become a church. But arguments about how oversight was exercised and by whom led to the formation of distinct ‘branches’ or expressions of Methodism within Britain, as well as in America and elsewhere. Moreover, whilst Methodism was in the process of becoming a separate church or churches, both in Britain and overseas, it was also in the process of becoming a worldwide phenomenon. British Methodism was exported to many countries of the British Empire and American episcopal Methodism (the United Methodist Church as it became), spread to many parts of the world. Today about 95% of Methodists in the world belong to episcopal Methodist churches (‘episcopal’ in the sense that they have the office of bishop, although those bishops are not in what is commonly described as the ‘historic episcopate’).
6. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the ecumenical movement got under way, Methodists began to reverse the tendency to fissure and began to unite in order better to fulfil what they saw as their missionary task. (It is noteworthy that this occurred in a period when similar concerns led to the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which can in turn be said to be one of the origins of both the ‘faith and order’ movement for church unity and the ‘world mission’ movement of the twentieth century.) Eventually three major branches of British Methodism united in 1932 to form the Methodist Church of Great Britain.
7. In the same period of time, there were also developments in the Church of England, not least in the ritualistic controversies, the church-building movement in various parts of the country, and the formation of new dioceses. This meant that neither Church was in the same situation, when relationships between the two of them came to be reconsidered, as it had been during the process of separation.

8. As a result of the initiative for unity of the 1920 Lambeth Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion, expressed in its 'Appeal to All Christian People', conversations took place between the Church of England and the Free Churches. These led in due course to bilateral conversations which culminated in the proposals of 1969 (renewed in 1972) for a two-stage unity scheme between the Church of England and the Methodist Church. The proposed united Church in England was premised on doctrinal agreement and an episcopally-ordained ministry. The proposals were endorsed by the Methodist Conference, but narrowly failed to achieve the 75% threshold in the General Synod. This failure left many Methodists disillusioned and embittered and many Anglicans, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, deeply distressed.
9. It took until 1996 before bilateral conversations between our two churches were resumed in a tentative way. In the meantime there had been a failed attempt to create a broader Covenant for Unity between the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, and the Moravian Church, but there was also the development of new 'Churches Together' models for creating unity in mission, which involved a much wider spread of partner churches, including the Roman Catholic Church and some Black Majority Churches.
10. The bilateral conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain led to the Formal Conversations that proposed the Covenant – an outstanding initiative for reconciliation and unity on the part of both our churches.

### **What have our churches said to each other in the Covenant?**

11. **First** the conversations were able to report agreement between the official positions of the two churches on the ultimate goal – the full visible unity of the Church of Christ – and on the need for churches to take whatever steps they could towards that goal and so to move ahead by agreed stages.

12. **Second**, an *Anglican-Methodist Covenant* affirmed that there was comprehensive doctrinal agreement between our two churches on the basis of their official teaching. This doctrinal accord included an outline agreement on episcopacy (which had been accepted in principle in a series of Methodist Conference statements over many years). Two areas of ongoing theological tension were identified: Calvinism and Arminianism, and the question of ‘Christian Perfection’. The Formal Conversations noted that there was a range of personal views on these subjects within both churches – they were not monochrome – and judged that because this was no bar to communion within each church it should not prevent communion between them. The first five years work of the Joint Implementation Commission appointed by the two covenant partners (JIC1; 2003-8) subsequently consolidated this broad doctrinal agreement in a number of areas, notably eucharistic doctrine, and proposed a reconciling, missiological approach to the issue of Arminianism and Calvinism.<sup>1</sup>
13. **Third**, the report affirmed the ecclesial authenticity of the existing ministries of word, sacrament and oversight in each church as a basis for shared ministry now and for further steps towards visible unity with an interchangeable ordained ministry in the future. [It is particularly in this area that we are able to bring forward a major new initiative in this interim report (see below).]
14. **Fourth**, the Covenant committed the two churches to seek to share decision-making and so to act as one in all the ways that were possible.
15. **Fifth**, the Covenant committed the churches ‘to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches’ and in particular to seek the creation of a united, interchangeable ordained ministry. In view of the fact that the Church of England,

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<sup>1</sup> JIC1 published the following reports that were presented to the General Synod of the Church of England and the Methodist Conference: *In the Spirit of the Covenant: Interim Report (2005)*; *Living God’s Covenant: Second Interim Report (2007)*; *Embracing the Covenant: Quinquennial Report (2008)*.



like all other Anglican churches, practises episcopal ordination and oversight, the Covenant noted that there already existed, in Anglican and Methodist official statements ‘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’.

16. These five points form the substance of the Affirmations and Commitments in the report *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Report of the Formal Conversations between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England (Methodist Publishing House and Church House Publishing 2001)* that were endorsed by the two churches in 2003 and form the basis of the covenantal relationship between us.

### **Poised to move forward in Covenant**

17. In the eight years since the Covenant was endorsed the covenantal relationship between our two churches has intensified, deepened and spread. The three reports of JIC 1 (*In the Spirit of the Covenant*, *Living God's Covenant* and *Embracing the Covenant*) have detailed numerous examples of shared worship, ministry and mission in England. It is true to say that our two churches are working together in many ways at every level of their life, from the annual meetings between the President and Vice-President of the Conference and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, through links between Dioceses and Districts, to the joint initiatives of circuits and deaneries, ‘local churches’ and parishes at the grass roots. The Fresh Expressions organisation is an exemplar of covenant working, not least in the fact that it has attracted the involvement of other churches (the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation having recently become partners). Some recent initiatives at the national/Connexional level follow.
18. Scottish and Welsh Methodists and Anglicans are now involved in the JIC. The Methodist Church is a church in three nations. The Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church are now represented on the JIC and a conversation is taking place as to whether they would wish to become formal signatories to the Covenant, alongside their existing ecumenical commitments.

The JIC has welcomed the references to the wider context and the inclusion of other experience that has resulted from the participation of representatives from Scotland and Wales.

19. The Church in Wales and the Methodist Church of Great Britain (expressed mainly through the constituent part of it known as the Methodist Church in Wales) are already members of a Covenant that was established in 1975 with the goal of establishing 'visible unity' between the Church in Wales, the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and those Baptist Churches willing to accept the Covenant. A Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales was established in 1976 to expedite the achievement of the Covenant's aim. The Trefeca Declaration of 2005 reaffirmed the member churches' commitment to the Covenant and it was agreed to fund the Commission for a period of six years until 2011. The Commission has now asked that member churches renew their commitment to support its work for a further five years.
20. The Scottish Episcopal Church and the Methodist Church in Scotland (ie the Scotland District of the Methodist Church of Great Britain acting in its own name but with the blessing of the Conference) together with the United Reformed Church in Scotland have also formally signed a Statement of Partnership in Perth on 23 January 2010 (known commonly as the EMU Partnership).
21. Both the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church are in a relationship with the United Reformed Church and both the Methodist Church and the Church of England are developing their own relationship with the URC.
22. The President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference addressed the General Synod in February 2010 and the Archbishop of Canterbury addressed the Methodist Conference in July 2010.
23. There is enhanced co-operation between the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Division and the Joint Public Issues

Team, which comprises public affairs personnel from the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

24. A joint Anglican-Methodist working party (Co-Chairs the Bishop of St Albans and Mr David Walton, a former Vice-President of Conference) is looking at the ecclesiological implications of emerging expressions of Church; this group has direct links with Fresh Expressions and expects to report in 2011.
25. The Methodist Discipleship and Ministries Team and the Church of England's Education Division have committed themselves to working more collaboratively across the board, including children's work, schools (the Methodist Education Commission is undertaking a major review of Methodist policy with regard to schools), further and higher education and adult education. Our joint Anglican-Methodist schools should be a flagship of the Covenant.
26. Both our churches are developing their relationship with the United Reformed Church. The URC has a representative on the JIC. The Methodist Council and the URC Mission Council held a joint meeting in 2010. The Church of England's Council for Christian Unity and the URC will bring forward the report of a bilateral study group on *Healing the Past, Building the Future* in 2011. The report proposes a service of reconciliation, healing of memories and mutual commitment at Westminster Abbey on 7 February 2012 in which there will be broad ecumenical participation.
27. Our two churches have merged their committees dealing with matters affecting or arising from local partnerships to form the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM). That Panel has both Roman Catholic and URC observers. There is a parallel Methodist-United Reformed Liaison Committee dealing with similar issues in local partnerships between Methodist and United Reformed churches. Conversations are beginning about how this work might be co-ordinated with that of MAPUM.

28. A Methodist who worships in a local church where the Methodist Church and the Church of England work in partnership, Elizabeth Hall, has been appointed as Safeguarding Officer for both churches, succeeding the Methodist minister the Revd Pearl Luxon. Mrs Hall is supported by a joint panel of support and advice, co-chaired by the Bishop of Hereford and a former President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd David Gamble.
29. The JIC is researching current joint training of Local Preachers and Readers in order to promote this further and expects to report on this in 2012.
30. Our two churches continue to develop ways of working together in ministerial training. There are notable developments and signs of hope in the part-time training courses and at the three centres where the Methodist Church now conducts full-time residential training (Durham, where the Wesley Study Centre and Cranmer Hall are both located within St John's College and operate as inter-dependent partners, sharing resources wherever possible; Cambridge, where Wesley House, Westcott House and Ridley Hall are close partners, with others, in the Cambridge Federation; and Birmingham, where the Church of England and the Methodist Church are major partners, with others, in The Queen's Foundation). There are joint processes for inspecting these institutions from the point of view of quality assurance. Care is taken that students share their learning experiences, that the institutions share resources for teaching, but also that adequate attention is given to ensure that people are formed appropriately for the distinctive ministries of our two churches, as well as being able to understand, relate to and serve each other's church.

### **The diaconate**

31. Among recent initiatives, the joint work on the diaconate, sponsored by the JIC, deserves separate mention. Following two pilot one-day consultations in 2009, a major consultation on the diaconate was held from 21-23 April 2010 at the Methodist Diaconal Order's Centre in Birmingham. Distinctive deacons from both churches were joined by several priests from the Church of

England and by Methodist presbyters. The Anglican priests had of course also been ordained to the diaconate, as the Church of England only ordains as priests those who have previously been ordained deacon; whereas the Methodist presbyters had not been ordained to the diaconate, since the Methodist Church practises direct ordination to presbyteral ministry.

32. The consultation began to explore the questions previously identified in *Embracing the Covenant*, including the following.
  - How does the diaconate relate to the Church's ministry of word and sacrament?
  - What sort of leadership role is appropriate to deacons?
  - What issues are raised by our churches' practices of direct or sequential ordination to the presbyterate?
  - What is the significance of the fact that Methodist deacons are members of a religious order?
  - What can we learn from each other's liturgies of ordination to the diaconate and teaching documents?
  
33. Participants were deeply moved by the experience of the consultation. In spite of certain differences of theological understanding and ordination practice, deacons from both churches experienced a significant convergence when they described what they actually do and reflected on their experience of ministering as deacons. The missional dynamic of diaconal ministry in both churches emerged strongly. This area remains work in progress and a further consultation is envisaged in due course. The full report of the consultation is available on the Covenant website [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk). A shorter outline is provided at Appendix 1 of this report, in a form which might prove useful as a discussion starter about some of these issues amongst groups of deacons and others in both our Churches.

### **Causes for concern**

34. In spite of all these encouraging initiatives and many more, especially at the local level, it is a fact that the Covenant is not a reality everywhere. Its implementation is patchy. There are some

parts of both churches that are resistant to the implications of the Covenant. There are some who think that it has no relevance to them. There is apathy about the biblical imperative of visible unity and complacency about the divided state of the Church of Christ in this country. When the call to share in God's mission is paramount not everyone sees the biblical connection with the visible unity of Christ's Body. So progress has been slower than expected. The JIC has always been clear that it alone cannot implement the Covenant: that can only be done by both Churches as a whole and in all their parts. The JIC's remit is 'to monitor and promote the implementation of the Covenant'. What the JIC can do – and does – is to encourage, share good practice, come up with creative ideas, strengthen the theological foundations of the Covenant, and provide useful resources. It can show the way ahead.

35. But what are the issues that are delaying the full and further implementation of the Covenant?
36. Both churches have been preoccupied in recent years with ostensibly internal issues, not least with questions relating to *episkope* (oversight) and episcopacy, and with restructuring and budgetary retrenchment. Recently, however, mission, in terms both of the public profile of the church and its outreach to the unchurched, has become the uncontested top priority. The necessary link between unity and mission therefore needs to be grasped afresh. God's Church and its mission is not an end in itself but is a sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the gathering up and reconciliation of all things in Christ (Eph 1.10, Col.1.20). The Holy Spirit who empowers the Church in mission (Luke 24.44-49) is the same Spirit of unity who animates the Church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.1-11). A disunited church and a divided mission cannot faithfully point to the goal of its existence and purpose, the unity of all things in Christ, the Kingdom of God. But not everyone yet appreciates that joint working in ministry and mission between our churches can conserve resources and make outreach more effective. If both our churches are to respond faithfully to their missionary imperative, to fulfil their calling to serve the present age, they are going to have to share their discernment and wisdom,

and find ways of deploying their resources of personnel (including clergy/ministers), buildings and finance with, for and on behalf of each other. That makes it vitally important that ways are found of correlating the decision-making processes at the various 'levels' in the two churches. The JIC began this work in *Embracing the Covenant* by describing and comparing these two sets of processes, but more now needs to be done to take things forward by the relevant authorities and officers in both Churches.

37. This in turn raises questions about how 'oversight' is understood and exercised in the two churches. It is here that the needs of mission and the imperatives towards unity, experienced in the Covenant, interact with supposedly 'internal' matters, such as the questions related to episcopacy with which in their different ways both churches have been grappling.

### **Episcopacy and the two churches**

38. In the Covenant the Church of England and the Methodist Church affirm for the first time the ecclesial authenticity of the ministries, sacraments and forms of oversight of the other church. The Covenant also recognises that progress towards visible unity requires the interchangeability of ordained ministries and acknowledges that this is bound up with the question of episcopal ordination and oversight.
39. For the past ten years the Church of England has been moving towards admitting women to the episcopate and draft legislation is currently making its way through diocesan synods before returning to the General Synod in 2012 for a final decision. Many Methodists (and not a few Anglicans) struggle to understand why this process should be, as it seems to them, so painfully slow. The Methodist Church believes that the equality of women and men in ministry is a truth that it has received from God. The Church of England has been seeking a way to include, in a church with female bishops, those who in conscience cannot accept this development. The 'open process of reception' (that is to say a process of internal and ecumenical discernment of the will of God for the Church) that the Church of England has embraced since the

early 1990's, through which it has been trying to include women in the episcopate and at the same time remain a united church, is a way of handling a divisive issue. Methodists might see parallels here with the way in which their church has slowly, respectfully and sometimes painfully sought to hold conflicting views on human sexuality within a united church.

40. The Covenant was premised on agreement in principle about the historic episcopate. The many Conference statements about the Methodist Church being willing to receive the historic episcopate from the wider Church were accepted at face value. Many Anglicans (and some Methodists) struggle to understand why the process of enacting those statements should be, as it seems to them, so painfully slow. The Church of England holds that the church being ordered for worship and mission through deacons, priests and bishops in the historic episcopate is a truth that it has received from the earliest days of the Church, one that attracts significant ecumenical consensus. The threefold ministry in visible historical continuity helps it to cohere as a church and to remain effective and obedient in worship and mission at times of internal diversity and debate. The three-fold ministry will therefore have to be part of that which enables the Church of England to increase the range of that diversity as it relates more closely to Methodism. Yet the outcome of a Connexional process in 2005-7 that focused on the report 'What Sort of Bishops?' indicated a lack of enthusiasm among Methodists about bishops. That lack of enthusiasm had several causes, but it demonstrated that whereas Methodists had consistently been prepared to receive the historic episcopate as part of a unity scheme for the sake of mission, they were not being convinced by the emphasis in the Church of England today on bishops as leaders and enablers in mission, or persuaded that receiving bishops in the historic episcopate into their own system would produce greater effectiveness in worship and mission.
41. Nevertheless, the Conference recognised that these questions remain to be addressed. At the request of the Conference, JIC 1 continued to work on this and made a proposal in *Embracing the Covenant* for the Methodist Church to incorporate the historic episcopate in a way that it believed would be true to Methodist



ecclesiology and polity. It believed that this latter point was of the utmost importance, and a proper response to the suggestion made by Archbishop Fisher in a sermon in 1946 for other churches to take episcopacy (in the form of bishops in the historic episcopate) into their systems and (as Archbishop Fisher emphasised) trying it out on their own ground. In what follows that proposal is represented in summary form in the light of the growing recognition in both churches of what we termed above the ‘missionary imperative’ and the need to develop unity in oversight so that we can together respond to the will of God and the promptings of the Spirit, discern the will of God, and correlate our deployment of resources in ministry and mission.

42. The proposal in *Embracing the Covenant* was for the ordination of the President of Conference within the historic episcopate, as a President-Bishop, so that future deacons, presbyters and bishops would be episcopally ordained, thus making possible an interchangeable ministry with that of the Church of England and bringing about a collegial unity in oversight involving both churches. The proposal suggested by JIC1 involved three theological premises:
  - 42.1 The Conference is widely seen as the ‘corporate bishop’ of the Methodist Church, carrying out responsibilities that, in an episcopally ordered church, fall to the bishops: teaching, ordaining and exercising discipline to ensure that the church is ordered in its worship and mission to remain true to the Gospel, the Christian tradition and the promptings of the Spirit in a changing world. Methodists and Anglicans alike can recognise that British Methodism exercises a corporate oversight (*episkope*) through the Conference.
  - 42.2 The President of Conference, who is always a presbyter, is entrusted with the highest form of personal *episkope* (oversight) in the Connexion, being given unique responsibilities, notably presiding at ordinations on behalf of the Conference (and it is significant that the only persons to whom presidency at ordinations is delegated are Past Presidents). The Presidency of the Conference models the partnership between ordained and lay

Christians in Church leadership. The President and Vice-President work together in ways that are appropriate to their callings as presbyter and lay person (or deacon) respectively.

- 42.3 The Methodist Connexion is a single unit of oversight, in the way that the Church of England, with its forty-four dioceses, is not. It would, therefore, be appropriate for a President-Bishop to exercise an episcopal ministry throughout the whole Methodist Connexion. Whether the President- Bishop served as President for a year (the current practice) or for more than a year, in a relatively short time a college of President- (and Past President-) Bishops would be built up. After their Presidential term they would be deployed by the Conference within the Connexion (again in continuation of current practice), combining stations at circuit or District level, or academic posts, with a wider episcopal ministry (similarly as at present).
43. The Methodist Church has still to respond formally to these proposals, which were advocated by the JIC in response to a request by the Conference. The JIC is aware that they interlink with a parallel process of discernment in the Methodist Church about the nature of the Presidency of the Conference (which currently involves a presbyteral President and a lay or diaconal Vice-President).

### **Presidency and the Conference**

44. The 2010 Conference endorsed the model of Presidential leadership set out in the report *Leading and Presiding: Developing the Presidency of the Conference* (see further below). The Conference also noted comments from the JIC that the biblical and theological material in the report provided a useful foundation for any further work on particular models of leadership and oversight but that it would be helpful if more work were now to be done on the Presidency in a way that took into account the suggestions made by the JIC in Chapter 5 of *Embracing the Covenant* that the Conference consider the model of a President-Bishop.
45. The JIC suggests that one starting point for any such further work is the recognition in Chapter 5 of *Embracing the Covenant* (p. 104) that in traditions that seek to be ordered in terms of the

historic episcopate there is a number of tasks that bishops are entrusted to carry out, though they carry them out ‘not on their own, but through the collegial and communal expressions of their oversight’. Those tasks are ‘determining doctrine and practice; ordaining, deploying and disciplining’. As that chapter went on to recognise, these are tasks which in Methodist polity belong to the Conference, and that the Conference can therefore be seen as a ‘corporate bishop’. The chapter then proceeded to build on the importance for both Anglican and Methodist (and other) traditions of the representative nature of ordained ministry (p. 97) by arguing that the President of the Conference is ‘the fullest expression of personal *episkope*, linking the Conference and the Connexion’ and ‘exercises an “episcopal” ministry on behalf of an “episcopal” Conference’; and that British Methodism could therefore incorporate the historic episcopate into its ordering through the President becoming a President-bishop (pp 104-5).

46. It is important to note that the tasks outlined above are not the only tasks of oversight exercised by the Conference. There are, for example, also tasks of ‘Christian conferring’ to discern the promptings of the Spirit; the setting of policy and strategy to enable response to those promptings; the management of finance; and other issues of managing trusteeship.
47. That understanding of the range of oversight exercised by the Conference needs to be taken with the traditional embodiment by Methodism of the understanding outlined above that those who are ordained act ‘not on their own, but through the collegial and communal expressions of their oversight’, and also the fact that the Conference (as ‘corporate bishop’) is made up of representatives of those who are ordained (both presbyters and deacons) and lay people. Together these factors have resulted in British Methodism having a Presidency, representing and embodying the Conference, that is made up of both a President (a presbyter) and a Vice-President (a lay person or a deacon).
48. It is that model which the 2010 report *Leading and Presiding* develops. The 2010 Conference adopted the model of Presidential leadership set out in section 5 of the report. That section begins by

distinguishing the Presidency from other forms of leadership in the Church (paragraph 5.1), stating that ‘one emphasis is on executive leadership which, amongst other things, both co-ordinates work and manages resources.....’ and that this is ‘... increasingly expressed through the office of General Secretary’. The second emphasis is on ‘... leadership which, amongst other things, acts as the representative embodiment of the authority of the Conference’ and which is ‘... found in the office of President and Vice-President, but needs to be more clearly articulated’.

49. Paragraph 5.2 therefore goes on to describe the leadership of the Presidency (including its lay and ordained constituent parts) as ‘... a complementary ministry of leadership which
- embodies the collaborative nature of leadership in the Church, affirming the significance and value of both ordained (presbyteral and diaconal) and lay ministry;
  - presides over the Conference and by virtue of that fact represents its authority throughout the year;
  - can therefore formally represent the Conference and the wider Connexion on public occasions;
  - stands at some distance from the executive machinery of the Church and is able in consequence to serve as pastor and consultant, and when required, can assist in the resolution of misunderstanding and conflict;
  - is available to visit widely in the Church, affirming and cementing the link between the ‘centre’ and the ‘periphery’ and can feed back insights gained thereby;
  - is able to offer personal insights, experience and prophetic vision which may in time become Conference-endorsed policy but have not yet acquired that status;
  - is thus able to energise the Church in its worship and mission.’
50. Within the collaborative model of Presidency that ensues, the constituent members have distinct roles. Many of the Conference’s functions of oversight (e.g. those set out above) can be presided over and represented by a lay person or a deacon. But there are some things which are properly reserved to the presbyteral member. Section 8 of the report expresses it as follows:

- 8.2 *We further recommend that the President, as the lead figure, should continue to be a presbyter. The principal reason for this is theological. Our doctrinal standards in the Deed of Union, while affirming that there is no exclusive priesthood pertaining to the presbyterate and that Christ's ministries are shared by both ordained and lay, nevertheless assign a 'principal and directing part' to those who are ordained as presbyters. This principle is observed in local church, circuit and district alike, and should be the case with the Conference also ...*
- 8.4 *As a presbyter the President's particular ministry should therefore be essentially presbyteral. It should focus on a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility. In the Conference that would include presiding at an ordination and at the Conference service of Holy Communion. Additionally we think that the person who presides in the name of the Conference over the reception of others into full connexion should be one who is himself or herself in full connexion. During the year also it is desirable that the President should be given opportunities to preside at Holy Communion, and to share in baptisms and confirmations. It is appropriate too that the President should be available as a pastor; especially to presbyters and deacons, and to have time for those who seek help and advice.*

51. It is the above that Methodists have sometimes understood as the 'Pastoral Office'. The (presbyteral) President as described in the report is the senior representative of that office in and on behalf of the Conference. This is not the whole of oversight. It is not the whole of the oversight or leadership of the wider Presidency. But it is a unique, constitutive part of presidential oversight. It does not of itself require the President to be a bishop in the historic episcopate, but it matches well with the marks of a bishop in the historic episcopate in the Church of England and other traditions.

It therefore provides a basis on which Methodism could proceed, should it wish to do so, to receive the historic episcopate as a gift and at the same time contribute its gift to those traditions that are ordered in the historic episcopate. The Presidency would lead, preside and be the representative embodiment of the authority of the corporate bishop of the Church, the Conference. It would consist of lay and/or diaconal members and a President-bishop, who would fulfil the unique tasks of the 'Pastoral Office'.

52. **The JIC therefore believes that the model in Leading and Presiding and the proposal of Embracing the Covenant are consonant and potentially convergent. It stands ready to clarify its proposals or to respond to requests for further advice. But while the Church of England's process regarding female bishops continues and while there is no clear outcome within the Methodist Church with regard to episcopacy, there is inevitably a sense of hiatus in the structural implementation of the Covenant.**

### **A major new initiative under the Covenant**

53. In the light of these concerns and unresolved issues, how should Methodists and Anglicans work together for a deeper implementation of the Covenant? We have noted above the links between the theme of unity in oversight and that of the deployment of ministry for the sake of mission. From a Church of England perspective, episcopal ordination will be necessary if future Methodist ministers (ie those who have not yet been received into full connexion and ordained) are fully to relate to the oversight structures of the Church of England and are to be capable of being deployed by them. From a Methodist perspective, being in some form of connexion with the Conference will be necessary if future clergy of the Church of England are fully to relate to the oversight structures of the Methodist Church and to be capable of being deployed by them. Work therefore needs to be undertaken to develop ways in which being in full connexion and the relationship that is created by episcopal ordination as practised in the Church of England are not mutually exclusive. That, together with the Methodist Church receiving episcopacy into its

system and the development of greater unity in oversight between our two churches including the possibility of women exercising episcopal oversight, would make possible the interchangeability of ministries for the sake of mission and worship.

54. The phrase ‘interchangeability of ministries’ usually refers to a situation in which the ordained ministers of one Church are eligible to be appointed to ministerial offices in the other without undergoing re-ordination. It can therefore involve an ordained minister of one church being under the oversight of another Church; or exercising oversight on behalf of another church; or presiding at a celebration of the Holy Communion according to the use of another Church. It can also involve joint ordinations, or the ordaining ministers of one church being asked to ordain on behalf of others.
55. The mutual affirmations of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant<sup>2</sup> have begun to change the context in which these matters can be approached. In affirmation 2 of the Covenant, the Church of England and the Methodist Church mutually affirm the authenticity of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist as each celebrates them, and in affirmations 4 and 5 both churches unequivocally affirm the ministry of the other. However, these affirmations do not go so far as to allow the interchangeability of Methodist and Church of England ministries. The Church of England’s discipline remains that no one can hold office in the Church of England as bishop, priest or deacon without being episcopally ordained. A Methodist presbyter or deacon, whose ordination the Church of England unequivocally affirms as God given and possessing the vocation of the Holy Spirit and the commission of Christ, may not therefore act in the place of a presbyter or deacon of the Church of England.
56. Yet while there are undoubtedly frustrations over the delay in implementing the structural implications of the Covenant, there is

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<sup>2</sup> *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*: The full text can be found at: [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/text.htm](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/text.htm) (Accessed 16.03.2011)

much that our two churches can do together at every level. The JIC has already promoted detailed advice about the untapped potential that exists within the rules of both churches for extensive shared mission and ministry<sup>3</sup>. We now bring forward a major initiative – Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas. While this development 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.

57. Shared ministry is not the same as interchangeability of ministry. So far as the Church of England is concerned, shared ministry embraces: full reciprocity between ministers in officiating at services of the Word; the offering of eucharistic hospitality by Anglicans to non-Anglicans (provided that they are 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 celebration of the Eucharist at which the ordained minister of a partner Church presides. [See further *In the Spirit of the Covenant* 2005 chapter 7].
58. Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas (CPEA) apply what is permitted under the rules of both churches to an area wider than the Anglican parish or Methodist local church, extending the provisions to Circuits and deaneries, even in principle to a whole diocese or District, as long as the clergy and people in each place are willing to participate. They enable a fuller and more strategic sharing of ministry in the cause of the mission of the one Church of Jesus Christ in a given area. Ministers of either church can support the worship and outreach of the other. Parishes and congregations can be united in many ways without losing their distinctive identity. For the Church of England this involves maximising the use of the ‘Ecumenical Canons’ (B 43 and B 44) – not however to create single congregation Local Ecumenical Partnerships (type 1 LEPs), but a form of Local Ecumenical Partnership which has similarities to Local Churches

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<sup>3</sup> *Embracing the Covenant* (2008) Chapter 3 and Appendices



in Covenanted Partnerships (type 2 LEPs), where the participating churches commit themselves to each other while retaining their distinctive identity. For the Methodist Church it involves exploiting the potential in Standing Orders for Circuits and Districts to enter such partnerships (amending their constitutions to do so if necessary) and for the Conference to authorise clergy of the Church of England to act on its behalf.

59. The JIC is grateful particularly to the Revd Dr Roger Paul of the Council for Christian Unity for his work on what follows in Part 2. It will be up to church leaders, working together, to implement (under the existing rules of both churches) what the JIC now puts forward. The JIC hopes that the Methodist Conference and the House of Bishops and the General Synod of the Church of England will endorse these proposals and encourage the Circuits, Districts and Dioceses to take them up.

## **PART 2 A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN SHARED MISSION AND MINISTRY**

### **Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas: Opportunities for Shared Ministry and Mission in the Context of the Methodist–Anglican Covenant**

#### **Summary**

60. The aim here is to set out a proposal for a form of Covenant Partnership, which will help to release untapped potential for shared mission and ministry in the context of the Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain. Specifically, a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area will enable the Covenant partners:
  - to share ministry within the whole area of the Covenant.
  - to develop a joint strategy for the deployment of ministry for the sake of mission in deaneries and circuits and in mission initiatives.
  
61. A Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area would be made by the bishop of the diocese and the appropriate authority of the Methodist Church, establishing a local ecumenical partnership within the whole, or part of the area of the diocese and the appropriate Methodist circuits (and the district(s) of which they are part). This would enable the bishop to authorise shared ministry within the provisions of Canon B 44.4. In Methodist terms, it would also allow for shared ministry, by identifying the places where Anglican priests and deacons can be appointed by the Conference to serve the Methodist Church as associate presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733A.
  
62. A Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area would provide a permissive framework in which joint mission strategies and joint deployment of ministry can develop. In Methodist terms this would enable the relevant district to fulfil its responsibilities for undertaking all developmental or extension work in mission through ecumenical partnerships wherever possible [see Standing Order 434(3), particularly sub-clause (iii)]. At the same time,

it would not involve inappropriate and complex constitutional arrangements for either Methodists or Anglicans.

### **Shared Ministry in the Context of the Covenant**

63. The proposal for Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas does not achieve the interchangeability of ordained ministries, but it does provide for a greatly enhanced form of shared ministry. Without the interchangeability of ordained ministries the provisions of Canons B 43 and B 44 represent the furthest the Church of England can go in sharing sacramental ministry with the Methodist Church. But the mutual affirmations of the Anglican Methodist Covenant<sup>4</sup> have changed the context in which the Ecumenical Canons can be applied. Under the Covenant the situations in which these possibilities of shared ministry, regulated by these canons, are applied may be extended without compromising the integrity of either party.
64. Work has already been done on making full use of Canon B 43 in the context of the Covenant<sup>5</sup>, which encourages the bishop to authorise shared ministry at parish and circuit level. However, although Canon B 43 applies to all parishes, the provisions for shared ministry regulated by Canon B 43 are limited in the following ways.
- Methodist ministers cannot be authorised to baptise according to the use of the Church of England.
  - Joint Confirmation cannot be authorised by the bishop: the provision of this is regulated by Canon B 44.
  - Canon B 43.9 applies only to joint services: ie those situations when the congregations of two or more churches join together for worship.

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<sup>4</sup> *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*. The full text can be found at: [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/text.htm](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/text.htm) (Accessed 16.03.2011).

<sup>5</sup> *Applying Canon B43 in the Context of the Covenant*, CCU 2004: [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/F-5-2\\_A-M\\_Covenant\\_Applying\\_B431.doc](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/F-5-2_A-M_Covenant_Applying_B431.doc) (Accessed 16.03.2011).

65. Approval has also been given to standardised procedures and proformas<sup>6</sup> for Church of England parishes and Methodist churches to establish local covenant partnerships within the provisions of Canon B 44. The bishop can take the initiative and approve the use of these standardised procedures in his diocese, and encourage parishes to take up the initiative locally.
66. Both these developments have offered new possibilities for shared ministry and could be used more widely. The present proposal builds on this previous work. It is based on the premise that the bishop and the Methodist district chair with the superintendent ministers have the central leadership role in promoting and establishing shared ministry, and strategic mission planning.

### ***Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas***

67. Conventional thinking regards local ecumenical partnerships as focused exclusively in single parishes or local churches. However, given sufficiently simple procedures and focusing on the essentials, there is untapped potential for establishing covenant partnerships across much wider areas, and thereby making the provisions of Canon B 44.4 available across that extended area. At the same time, it makes things easier for the Methodist Church, in which local churches are the primary unit in which people engage in worship and mission (hearing the Word preached, receiving the sacraments, and being formed in discipleship) but are also the constituent parts of circuits, which are the primary unit for the discernment of needs and strategic deployment of resources of personnel (lay and ordained), buildings and finance to meet them.
68. A Local Ecumenical Partnership is established when the participating churches enter into a local covenant. The Bishops' Code of Practice for the Ecumenical Canons, following the Group for Local Unity,

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<sup>6</sup> The Papers can be found at: [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/local.htm](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/local.htm) see also: [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/a\\_m\\_methodist\\_040708.doc](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/a_m_methodist_040708.doc) for an introduction for Methodists. (Accessed 16.03.2011).

defines a Local Ecumenical Partnership ‘as existing “where there is a formal written agreement affecting the ministry, congregational life, buildings and/or mission projects of more than one denomination: and a recognition of that agreement by the Sponsoring Body, and authorisation by the appropriate denominational authorities.”’<sup>7</sup>

69. The primary act which brings the local ecumenical partnership into existence is the making of the local covenant through an agreement of the appropriate authorities of participating churches. The particular agreements and authorisations, which describe the life of the local ecumenical partnership, are second order matters, arising out of the act of covenanting.
70. The proposal here is for a form of Local Ecumenical Partnership using the existing provisions of Canon B 44, namely ‘A Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area’.
71. In a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area:
  - the congregations of the participating churches remain distinct, normally worshipping in their own church buildings, and retaining their own PCCs and Methodist Church Councils;
  - Parishes and local Methodist churches continue to be accountable to the bishop on one hand, and the circuit and Connexion on the other;
  - Ministers are appointed by their respective churches, and continue to be subject to their own church’s discipline;
  - the appropriate focus for the specific commitments of the covenant partnership is joint mission and shared ministry;
  - the provisions for shared sacramental ministry regulated by Canon B 44.4 and by Methodist Standing Orders within such an extended area are available within the whole of the extended area.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ecumenical Relations - Ecumenical Canons B 43 and B 44: Code Of Practice*. Canon B 43: Of Relations With Other Churches; Canon B 44: Of Local Ecumenical Projects. Original 1989 Edition with updates and amendments from the 1997 Supplement. The text can be found at: [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/Bishops\\_Code.pdf](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/Bishops_Code.pdf) (Accessed 16.03.2011).

72. The polity and identity of each Church is preserved. A Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area does not merge local congregations, and, so far as the Church of England is concerned, does not compromise the rights of parishes or incumbents. It is a voluntary commitment.
73. In essence, a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area takes the form of a local covenant entered into between the bishop of the diocese and the appropriate authority of the Methodist Church – possibly the District and the Circuits of that District which fall within the area of the diocese. The basic form of covenant that is recommended is that of the Anglican Methodist Covenant itself, with its preamble, affirmations and commitments. Commitments 2 and 3 of the Covenant pledge both churches at all levels to undertake shared mission, worship and learning. In response to Commitment 4 forms of Eucharistic sharing are encouraged. Commitment 6 mandates both churches to develop joint decision making, especially in developing a joint mission strategy, and also a joint strategy for the deployment of ministry within the area of the extended LEP.
74. In addition specific commitments relating to the area itself may be made. Three specific commitments should normally be included:
- 74.1 The covenant partners each commit themselves to authorise ministers of their churches to conduct worship in each other's places of worship according to the regulations of their church. The bishop would therefore commit himself to authorise Methodist presbyters according to the provisions of Canon B 44.4 throughout the extended area, including baptising according to the use of the Church of England (where the family concerned agrees) and presiding at services of Holy Communion (which would not “be held out or taken to be a celebration ... according to the use of the Church of England”). The relevant authorities of the Methodist circuits and district would commit themselves to ensure that the Methodist Conference authorises Anglican priests and deacons to serve as associate presbyters or deacons throughout the same area.

- 74.2 The covenant partners commit themselves to developing a joint strategy for deploying ministry in the area, and to consulting over appointments.
- 74.3 The covenant partners commit themselves to developing joint mission strategies in the area.
75. Appropriate structures of consultation and planning would need to be developed in order to work out these commitments in practice, but the precise form of these would not have to be part of the covenant agreement, and could be adapted in response to the developing relationship.

### **The Canonical Basis for Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas**

76. Canon B 44 regulates for the Church of England the establishing of Local Ecumenical Partnerships, and the provisions which the bishop may make for the exercise of shared sacramental ministry within the area of the LEP.
77. Canon B 44 makes it clear that the bishop of the diocese makes the covenant to establish a local ecumenical partnership. According to paragraph 1.(1) he enters into the agreement with the appropriate authorities of the other participating churches in order for the Church of England to participate in a local ecumenical partnership established (or to be established) in an area comprising a parish or part of a parish in his diocese.
78. Such an agreement is in force for a period of a maximum of seven years, after which the bishop, after consultation, may renew or terminate the agreement.
79. Paragraph 1.(3) makes provision for the incumbent, the PCC and a Parochial Church Meeting of the Parish concerned and for the Diocesan Pastoral Committee to approve the agreement. Without this approval the bishop may not enter into the agreement.

80. To satisfy the requirements of Canon B 44.1(3) all the PCCs and incumbents of Church of England parishes in the area would need to affirm the covenant statement, with its specific additions, and give their approval for a local covenanted partnership with the Methodist Church to be established in the area. The Methodist circuits and district must similarly affirm the covenant and approve the formation of the local covenanted partnership. The Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area will then comprise all parishes and local churches and circuits that have given their approval.
81. The right of an incumbent or a PCC not to approve the covenant partnership is preserved. This means that there may be parishes in the proposed area which are not part of the area of the Covenant Partnership. Where there is a high density of non-participating parishes in a proposed area, the approach set out here would not be appropriate. Where only a few parishes decline to participate, it is still possible to establish a Covenant Partnership. It is important to acknowledge the different responses of incumbents and parishes. Those who withhold their approval may well have relations with other churches which are equally important to cultivate. It would also still be possible for such parishes to receive the ministry of Methodist ministers within the provisions of Canon B 43.

### **The Area of the Local Ecumenical Partnership**

82. When an LEP is established in an area of a parish, it is possible to extend the area so as to include another parish or part of a parish. (B 44.1.(2)). The Bishops' Code of Practice for the Ecumenical Canons specifically endorse such extended LEPs: *Where the Local Ecumenical Project<sup>8</sup> relates to an area rather than an institution, great care needs to be taken in clarifying the boundaries. For the Church of England, this may mean a parish, part of a parish, or a number of parishes.*
83. In order to extend the area of an LEP in this way, the approval of each parish included is needed.

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<sup>8</sup> Local Ecumenical Projects are now described as Local Ecumenical Partnerships.



## **The Bishop's Authorisations for Shared Ministry<sup>9</sup>**

84. Paragraphs 4(1) (c) and (f) of Canon B 44 allow the bishop to authorise sacramental ministry exercised by ministers of other churches participating in the LEP, and paragraphs 4(1) (a) and (d) allow Church of England ministers to be appointed to and exercise a eucharistic ministry within the area of an LEP.
  
85. In a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area, the provisions of Canon B 44 enable all Methodist presbyters to be authorised to baptise according to the use of the Church of England (subject to the agreement of the parties concerned), and to preside at services of Holy Communion in Church of England places of worship as part of the normal schedule of worship throughout the area. Furthermore, the provisions of Canon B 43 enable Methodist presbyters to exercise a ministry of the word and to conduct funerals (subject to the agreement of the parties concerned) in Church of England places of worship. They would however, not be able to conduct weddings according to the rites of Church of England, because of the legal positions of the two churches in these matters. In Methodist terms, those priests of the Church of England appointed as associate presbyters under Standing Order 733A would be able to undertake in and on behalf of the Methodist churches in the area “particular functions of the ministry of the word and the ministry of sacrament, such as preaching, conducting services and administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; and particular functions of the ministry of pastoral responsibility in the sense of undertaking pastoral work and offering pastoral care, but not of exercising pastoral charge”.
  
86. The bishop may also make provision, if he were so minded, for joint confirmations under Canon B 44.4 within the area of the LEP.

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<sup>9</sup> For standard letters of authorization go to: [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/ToolsD8\\_LCP\\_Bishops\\_Authorisations.doc](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/ToolsD8_LCP_Bishops_Authorisations.doc) (Accessed 16.03.2011).

87. Canon B 44.3 (a) requires that in the case of the celebration of the Eucharist, notice of the rite to be used and of the Church to which the presiding minister belongs must be given. Paragraph 3 (b) goes on to state that *No such service, notwithstanding that the form of service used may follow a form authorised under Canon B 1 or a form substantially similar thereto, shall be held out or taken to be a celebration of the Holy Communion according to the use of the Church of England.*
88. This paragraph may be interpreted in a negative way. However, in *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*, the Church of England unequivocally affirms that the word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist are duly administered and celebrated in the Methodist Church. There is no doubt from the perspective of this affirmation, that Holy Communion at which a Methodist presbyter presides is therefore an authentic celebration of the Eucharist in Christ's Church. In giving notice of any celebration of the Eucharist, expressions such as 'Methodist Communion/Eucharist' or 'Anglican Communion/Eucharist' should be avoided. All celebrations, irrespective of the Church of the minister, should be notified as Holy Communion or the Eucharist, with the details of the rite and the Church to which the minister belongs given in parenthesis.

### **The Methodist Response**

89. Methodists need their equivalent of the bishop's agreement for establishing a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area. A formal resolution of the Conference would be needed empowering those exercising the *episkope* of the Conference in local situations (i.e. ministers appointed to those situations to exercise pastoral charge and the governance bodies acting by subsidiarity on behalf of the Conference with which they interact) to make such agreements within the parameters of the overall Covenant. They should also report to the Conference (or its officers) when they have made such an agreement. Methodist material is also needed about what these measures will and will not allow Anglican clergy to do for Methodism in ecumenical contexts.

90. Methodists will welcome the possibility of developing covenanted partnerships in extended areas. Some districts have already sought to make partnerships or local expressions of the covenant with partner Churches in their area. It is interesting to note that the relevant authorities of the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church are already seeking to develop an extended partnership in the geographic area of Cumbria. To encourage such things to happen, to ensure that they are not suffocated by additional bureaucracy but at the same time to ensure that they are ‘connexional’ in the sense of being coherent across the whole of the Connexion, some minor amendments need to be made to some Standing Orders to enable extended covenanted partnerships to be formed without the need for additional constitutions or vetting procedures.<sup>10</sup>
91. It is worth noting that whereas in the polity of the Church of England individual parishes would have the right to decline to participate in any extended covenanted partnership entered into by their diocese or the part of the diocese in which they are situated, in that of the Methodist Church Local Churches and Circuit Meetings would be constituent parts of the Circuit Meeting or District Synod which made the decision to form any partnership affecting them.
92. The development of covenanted partnerships in extended areas raises the question of how Methodists would give status and authority to ordained ministers of other Churches. Methodist polity [Clauses 43, 44, 45 and 45A of the Deed of Union and Standing Orders 732, 733 and 733A] has increasingly moved towards a distinction between the recognition given to ministers of Churches where there is a corporate Church-to-Church agreement or partnership arrangement with the Methodist Church on the one hand, and on the other that given to ministers of Churches where there is no such agreement and who approach the Methodist

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<sup>10</sup> At the moment, Standing Orders only provide for local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs) and require that each of them has a full-blown constitution that is vetted and approved at both district and connexional levels of the Church. The underlying model seems to be that of a single congregation LEP.

Church as individuals. That distinction now needs to be made explicit. The category of “Authorised to Serve the Methodist Church as Ministers (i.e. presbyters) or Deacons” would then be reserved for the latter option i.e. those who seek to serve the Methodist Church as individuals and not under a Church-to-Church agreement. In cases where there is a Church-to-Church agreement, ministers would be “Recognised and Regarded as Admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference (as presbyters or deacons)” where they were fully seconded to the Conference and exercising their discipline and accountability for their vocation through the Conference to their own Church; or would be “Associate Ministers (presbyters) or Deacons” where they were not fully seconded to the Conference. If the Standing Order governing the latter category [SO 733A] were amended slightly it would enable Associate Ministers not only to work alongside and fulfil the functions of Methodist ministers in circuit or other appointments, but also for those suitably qualified in their own Churches to serve as Associate Superintendents and Associate Chairs of District.

93. Associate Superintendents and Associate Chairs would not have responsibility for or control over Methodist resources or governance bodies, which would remain autonomous. But they would be able to co-discern, co-deploy the resources of their own Church and co-fulfil their own responsibilities together with the Superintendent and Chair.<sup>11</sup>
94. As noted above, where an extended covenanted partnership is created as a local or regional embodiment of a Church-to-Church

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<sup>11</sup> This would be to re-embody or re-express a traditional principle in Methodism. The original version of the 1932 Deed of Union had a clause which spoke of the ability of the Conference to “recognise and regard” other Churches as being part of it whilst being organised, governed and regulated in their own ways. The clause referred to “Colonial Churches and Foreign Missions”, but fits well with the Conference’s relationship with, say, a Covenant Partner. At the least it shows that it is not just individual ministers who are in connexion with the Conference, but that Church bodies can be in some form of connexion as well; and that being “recognised and regarded” is not just applicable to ministers but also to Churches.

agreement such as the Covenant, there would be no need for additional constitutional bureaucracy or vetting. Similarly, in such a situation there would be no need for individual applications from ministers to be given “associate” status, or for the vetting of them at district and connexional levels. All those who are ordained, in good standing and authorised or licensed by their own Church to serve in an area covered by an extended covenanted partnership would be automatically granted “associate” status by the Methodist Church.

95. What is possible for ordained ministers (both presbyters and deacons in Methodist terms) could also be the case for other ministries. For example, Lay Readers could be automatically granted the status of Associate Local Preachers in an extended covenanted partnership, again without further bureaucracy or vetting.<sup>12</sup> Such arrangements might also provide a way of dealing with developments such as Pioneer ministries.
96. What are outlined above are initiatives in Methodism that parallel those in the Church of England. But they have the potential to be of wider application than the relationship between the Methodist Church and the Church of England. They could, for example, be of enormous benefit in the relationship between the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. It might also be of help to the EMU (ie Episcopalian, Methodist United Reformed) Partnership within Scotland and to the Covenant in Wales.

### **Establishing a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area**

97. The key to establishing Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas is the active and committed leadership given by the bishop and

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<sup>12</sup> The issues of Local Preachers and Readers were discussed in Chapter 4 of *Living God's Covenant (2007)* entitled “Encouraging Lay Ministry”. That chapter together with Chapter 3 and the Appendices to *Embracing the Covenant* set out what it is already possible for Methodist Local Preachers to be invited to do in worship within the Church of England. It also contained a proposal that the Church of England consider whether it can lift the current canonical requirement for the Episcopal Confirmation of those seeking a recognised ministry in that Church, who have previously been (presbyterally) confirmed in the Methodist Church.

the district chair or circuit superintendent acting jointly, without which, there would be very little incentive or co-ordination to enable this to happen. It is also important to ensure that the essential simplicity involved in local covenanting is the focus, rather than the complexity of constitutions and joint decision making. It helps to identify where such complexities may arise, and to avoid them as far as possible. Being clear about the purpose and benefits of forming a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area will also help parishes and circuits to buy into it. Four steps are needed to establish a Local Mission Covenant, depending on how far the covenant relationship had already developed in that area, as illustrated in the diagram below.

98. What it is possible to achieve in practice will depend on finding mutual agreement on the most appropriate area in which to establish a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area. Boundaries do not always coincide. It is important for appropriate structures in each church to relate together.
  
99. The establishing of Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas should be seen as a developmental process, which includes:
  - Each parish and local Methodist church being encouraged in ways appropriate to the polity of the two Churches (see further paragraph 32 above) to approve the local mission covenant in order to become part of it, which will contribute to the continuing reception of *An Anglican Methodist Covenant* at local level.
  - The possibility of additional parishes and Methodist circuits coming into the local mission covenant.
  - Growth in joint planning for mission and ministry at all levels within the area of the covenant.
  - The encouragement of local initiatives by providing a supportive framework.

## Four Steps to Establish a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area

### Vision

A joint Covenant Vision Statement is developed by the bishop and the district chair or superintendent in consultation with diocesan bodies, and with circuits, setting out the purpose and benefits of establishing the Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area.



### Development

Joint planning for and resourcing of mission and the deployment of shared ministry throughout the area of the Covenant Partnership enables benefits and fruits to develop. Additional parishes and local churches or circuits may become part of the Covenant Partnership in accordance with the provisions of Canon B44.1(2). As the work together develops the Vision may also develop.

### Consultation

The Covenant Vision Statement and the text of the Anglican Methodist Covenant are studied at local level. All parishes and local Methodist Churches are invited to affirm the documents and to approve the Covenant Partnership. Those parishes and circuits which approve will become part of the Covenant Partnership.

### Covenanting

The Covenant is made between the bishop and the appropriate authorities in the the Methodist Church, at a joint celebration. The bishop issues his authorisations to Methodist ministers and to Church of England Clergy within the provisions of Canon B44. The Methodist Church also issues its authorisations to Church of England Clergy.



## What does this proposal achieve?

100. The immediate benefit of establishing a Covenant Partnership in an Extended Area is to enable Methodist Ministers to be authorised to exercise a sacramental ministry within the provisions of Canon B 44 in any of the Church of England parishes which are included in the partnership. Church of England clergy can likewise exercise a ministry in any of the Methodist churches which are included. Once established, therefore, the Covenant Partnership is a *permissive* instrument for shared ministry throughout the area of the covenant, without the need for establishing numbers of local ecumenical partnerships at parish and local Methodist church level.
101. However, the main emphasis in this proposal goes beyond local sharing of sacramental ministry and focuses on strategic ministry and mission in the context of the Covenant. A commitment to joint planning for mission and ministry is therefore expected to be part of the Covenant Vision. The authorisations for shared ministry could be linked, for example, to particular appointments within the area of the covenant, as the joint planning for ministry develops. The overall strategy should be worked out at diocesan and district level, with local plans worked out at deanery/cluster of parishes and circuit level. Joint planning for the deployment of shared ministry will help to make full use of the arrangement.
102. This development will be particularly valuable in areas where there is already emerging a sense of shared ministry between circuits and deaneries, or within multi parish benefices and a group of Methodist churches within part of a circuit. For example, two or three multi parish benefices, covering an area of over 100 square miles, is not uncommon in some areas of the country. This area may also contain a number of Methodist churches. The Methodist and Church of England ministers in this area are working in the same communities with the same people. To work as a team in such an area not only makes practical sense, but also enables the Christian presence in each community to be stronger.



103. There will inevitably be Church of England parishes and some Methodist churches that do not wish to be included in any covenant partnership that is being formed, although they would be able to join subsequently as they see the need and benefits. The joint strategy and local planning would be able to take account of the gaps.
104. The proposal could also relate to the concerns of Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams (FEASTS), and could be a gift to people working with the fresh expressions agenda, especially by:
  - Providing a framework for the Church of England and the Methodist Church to work together in freeing up ordained ministry for fresh expressions, and
  - Enabling sacramental sharing in ecumenical fresh expressions through shared ministry.

### **Moving Forward Together**

105. Some dioceses and districts and circuits are already working closely together, and see the need for developing structures which will facilitate greater sharing of ministry. The most helpful way to encourage the uptake of Covenant Partnerships in Extended Areas, would be for a diocese and a district to take the lead in showing its potential. The three way partnership, between the Diocese of Carlisle, the Methodist District and URC Synod that is emerging in Cumbria, gives reason to hope that this proposal will offer new opportunities and meet real needs on the ground.

## APPENDIX 1

### CONFERRING ABOUT THE DIACONATE

#### Introduction

1. A consultation on the diaconate was held at the Methodist Diaconal Centre in Birmingham in April 2010. It was held in the context of shared worship and shared stories. Through the narratives of experience, ministry and sense of vocation, it proved possible to explore the richness of diaconal work and the potential for mission and outreach in God's kingdom. Those attending found that there was convergence and much to rejoice in as deacons from each tradition shared their strength of conviction about their specific calling and the blessings that come from their activities. There was also an acceptance that each tradition had a distinct understanding of the relationship of diaconal roles to other ordained ministries, which led to a sense of divergence.

#### The Diaconate and Ministry

2. The consultation began from the insight that 'diaconal ministry' in the broadest sense of that term as 'loving service' is the work of all Christian people and is different from the more specific or focussed concept of 'the ministry of deacons'. It was readily apparent that the ministry of deacons was very strong, developing and growing and very similar in each tradition. It involved foretelling and forth-telling. It was sacramental, incarnational and pastoral. It was a specific order of ministry which reflects in particular ways the symbolic world of Christ's sacrifice, of being Christ in that place. The deacons present described their sense of embodying the Gospel in their vocation; their restlessness to proclaim the 'foolishness' of the Gospel in their work and relationships; their calling to be (as some described it) like 'oil flowing into a space and taking shape there'; their sense of moving beyond the ministry of the church. They felt called to unsettle and challenge the church and to challenge injustice; to travel along with people for a time, breaking open the word, and sowing seeds. They saw their work as relational: teaching, forming, being

invisible but abundantly present, offering prophetic leadership, and being a mischievous messenger to all. The deacons saw themselves as working both with a sense of personal autonomy and also under the oversight of others; and in each case doing so in response to a calling from God within the context of a known tradition and structure.

3. In Methodism, presbyteral ministry has a particular focus in a ministry of 'word and sacrament' and involves taking a leading and directing role in the life of the Church. The ministry of deacons in the Methodist Church is distinct from that of presbyters, and the Diaconal Order is both a separate Order of Ministry and also a Religious Order. Nevertheless, it is an order of ministry and some deacons would not wish 'word and sacrament' to be restricted to presbyters as narrowly as the Methodist Church has done in the past, but would want to develop clearer ways in which deacons could participate in them. For the Church of England, diaconal ordination is usually transitional in the sense that whereas not all deacons would wish to move on to priestly ordination, all those who wish to be ordained as priests have also to have first been ordained as deacons. 'Transition' therefore does not imply people abandon the diaconate in entering the presbyterate. Moreover, the ministry of word and sacrament is foundational for the deacon (in assisting the priest) and normal throughout the threefold ministry into priesthood and episcopacy. In the Methodist Church, where diaconal ordination is not transitional, deacons work collaboratively with all forms of ministry, lay and ordained. Methodist deacons do not preach by virtue of their ordination. Some deacons do preach, but may do so only because they have been previously admitted as Local Preachers. Similarly, deacons do not normally preside at Holy Communion.

### **The Diaconate and Leadership**

4. In discussions about leadership, there was broad agreement and consensus. Leadership for deacons is prophetic, an expression of servant leadership, modelled on Christ. It is exemplified by taking initiatives to work at the edges, on the fringe of traditional styles

of ‘church work’. Leadership within the diaconate is shown in service which points to God and heralds good news. It is task-orientated. Service is offered as a directed and intentional choice rather than merely a way of responding to another’s directive as a subordinate.

5. It was felt that listening, reciprocal learning and participating in energising relationships inevitably made the role of deacons flexible and fluid. The work may involve teaching or facilitating, making things happen. It is focussed on creating solutions to problems, and demonstrating a passion and enthusiasm that allows other people to “buy into” them. The work can exist within the institution of the Church, working ‘middle-in’ rather than ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’, for example, as an aide to a Bishop by working with curates across a wide theological spectrum, or acting as a go-between, nurturing, teaching, offering pastoral care, being alongside people, and connecting people at different levels of authority. This work can also exist outside the institution, reaching out beyond traditional boundaries of the Church in shared concern with others: helping those at the margins of society, challenging injustice, enabling others to participate in something they otherwise might not get the chance to do, and then continuing to interpret the project back to the churches through preaching and teaching. Thus deacons have a multiplicity of networking roles, acting as bridge-builders and interpreters, and helping people to work together.

## **The Diaconate and Ordination**

6. The members of the consultation concluded that there was considerable resonance and overlap between the ordinals of the two Churches. But it was felt that the words used to describe the purpose of deacons’ ministry in the ordinals were somewhat different from those that deacons from both Churches were using to describe their own ministry.
7. An Anglican deacon’s identity is located in the symbolic giving of a stole to be worn when assisting at the Eucharist. In this ordinal, the role of ‘herald’ is clearly stated. Allegiance is expressed to the

Sovereign in a way that is no different from oaths made by other ministers on multiple occasions. Within the liturgy, a commitment to a particular relationship with a Bishop is created. The Bishop is the ordaining authority, through the laying on of hands, and enables a deacon to hold a position located within the diocese and in relationship with him. Deacons are given specific licences that help to define and authorise their work within a particular place.

8. A Methodist deacon's identity is located in the giving of a bible as a sign of belonging to a particular order of ministry; and a badge, locating that person as a member of a particular religious order. In parallel with the pattern of ordination for Methodist presbyters, deacons are received into Full Connexion by a standing vote of the Conference. In receiving them into Full Connexion with itself as Methodist deacons, the Conference authorises that they also be ordained into the order of deacon in the church universal. [Methodist ordination services include the laying on of hands by the President (or a former President) of the Conference, the Warden of the Diaconal Order and also a World Church Representative.] In receiving them into Full Connexion the Conference also by that act constitutes them as members of the religious order.
9. The representatives from both traditions had some reservations about their own existing ordinals. Some queried whether the references in them to foot washing should be particularly associated with the role of a deacon, when the Biblical material does not limit it in this way.
10. That deacons have an ordained ministry is significant to both the Church of England and the Methodist Church. The significance has distinctive reference points in the histories and traditions of both Churches and this has the potential to create divergence rather than convergence within discussions.
11. The Anglican Church practices sequential ordination so that normally all bishops and priests have previously been ordained deacons and remain deacons. For some, however, the calling to the diaconate is primary and is the vital essence of their calling: they

see themselves as ‘distinctive deacons’ rather than ‘transitional deacons’ (as described above) who are ultimately called to other ministries within the threefold order. Some within the Church of England expressed the thought that ‘the hidden deacon’ needs to be recovered and celebrated within the other orders of ministry. The work of ‘distinctive deacons’ and those who work as deacons before moving on to the priesthood, would be stronger if the ministry was always inhabited for a time period greater than the conventional, single year. This idea would be resisted by some for whom non-diaconal ministries are the focus of their calling.

12. For the Methodist Church, up until 1936 the Wesley Deaconesses made a lifelong commitment to become members of a religious order that was affirmed by the church through a service of ‘consecration’. After this date, deacons were said to be ‘ordained’, but without them being constituted as a formal order of ministry within the Church. In 1998, the Methodist Church made the decision that they should be recognised as an order of ministry, and gave effect to this and symbolic affirmation of it by receiving deacons into full Connexion.
13. On rare occasions it is possible for someone to move between the Diaconal and Presbyteral orders of ministry within Methodism. This involves an official resignation from the former order, a concept which was strongly resisted by the Church of England members taking part in the Diaconal Consultations. Likewise, negative responses were generated when Methodists were challenged to consider a transitional model which would require those called to presbyteral ministry to enter the Diaconal Order first. These thoughts highlighted different views of what is going on ontologically at ordination and how people are called to the respective orders within their tradition.

### **Deacons and Priests/Presbyters**

14. In the Methodist Church, the ministry of presbyters and deacons are complementary and distinctive. The picture discussed at the consultation was three-dimensional: a coin – where deacons (one side) and presbyters (the other side) served God’s people to

bind and integrate the whole, meeting all needs. In the Church of England, the picture of ministry is that of a triangle with 3 corrective foci at different points of a triangle – bishop, priest and deacon – with the diaconal ministry of the whole church, including laity, operating in the space between these.

15. The pictures of a ‘two-sided coin’ (within Methodism) and ‘triangle’ (within the Church of England) emerged as a way of illustrating a common approach to Christian ministries within two different systems of polity. The specific tradition sets the particular structures, options and conditions available to people who offer ministry within that particular organisation. Thus, many Anglican priests are called to priesthood but enter this calling via the diaconate because of their own church’s structure and process. Methodist presbyters are called upon to specifically discern a calling to a distinctive responsibility that includes aspects of diaconal ministry but is not a call to the diaconate.
16. There can be said to be a functional symmetry between Anglican priests and Methodist presbyters but not the same ministry because of distinctly different components to their identity. Previous conversations about the interchangeability of the ministries of priests and presbyter have left the role and influence of the diaconate aside and invisible. Current conversations with deacons from the two Churches raise important ontological distinctions.

### **Deacons: Spiritual Life and Mission**

17. Within the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO), some deacons feel their primary calling is to be a member of a religious order and for them the practice of diaconal ministry is secondary, while others feel a call to a lifelong commitment to the practice of diaconal ministry as an ordained person, as their primary focus, and membership of a religious order is therefore secondary. Deacons are a community of practice, with the Order providing a strong sense of mutual responsibility and accountability; a very distinctive symbiosis of work and spiritual structuring.

18. There was a positive, wistful admiration for the sense of spiritual connection and collegiality experienced by Methodist deacons from Church of England dioceses. Collegiality within the Church of England varies widely from place to place and can be found within the college of bishops, priests in a diocese, in the Maundy Thursday Eucharist, in the distinctive diaconate and sometimes in theological colleges. Anglicans would emphasise collegiality, including a particularly strong relationship needed between the deacons and the bishop.
19. As for mission and outreach, there was a sense that God's mission was being carried out wherever deacons found themselves working in situations where others did not want to work. Being in collaboration with others was a key theme in shared stories about projects and achievements as told by contemporary deacons. Examples of mission would thus include working as a Diocesan Director of Ordinands, being a chaplain in a retail outlet, sharing time with prostitutes, working with asylum seekers or taking a stance against human trafficking. Part of the problem and confusion of the diaconate is that diaconal ministry (as a broad or generic concept) is grounded in the call of all believers, whilst deacons act as a 'magnifying glass' for this ministry.

### **Points for further discussion**

20. The diaconal consultation held on 21-23 April, 2010 produced some challenging findings with which our traditions will continue to wrestle. Some descriptive and helpful pictures emerged, enabling improved understanding. What is offered here is not so much a formal theological report as a description of the outcomes of one consultation which might provide useful starting points for other discussions.
21. The consultation was felt to have been a harmonious and collaborative exchange of ideas and perceptions. This was likened to hearing 'different notes but the same melody'. Within the whole, different components were introduced, played in major and minor keys, and there was a common knowledge that the people outside needed to hear the resurrection song.



22. The question was asked: What does ‘full, visible unity’ mean with regard to the ministry of deacons? The following points were identified for further discussion.

### **For both our Churches**

- It was felt important to welcome in deacons from another Church with openness and a willingness to learn and grow together, each retaining distinctiveness and holding on to that which is precious and life-giving within their vocation and calling.
- There is a need for an ongoing and developing understanding of diaconal theology rooted in contemporary praxis and practise.
- There is a need for both traditions to own this ministry and explore ‘how the church is changed by this ministry.’
- There is an ecumenical ferment about the nature of the diaconate, which is an encouraging sign, and is good for the development of the diaconate in all churches.
- Both Anglican and Methodist understandings have moved in the recent past and this should continue.
- From the Church of England point of view, the difference in practice between direct and sequential ordination is not in itself a barrier to full visible communion between the Methodist and Church of England Churches, because the Lutheran Churches of the Porvoo Agreement also practice direct ordination to the priesthood and are in communion with the British and Irish Anglican Churches.

### **For the Church of England**

- There is a need to allow the permanent diaconate ‘to be a bit more bold’ and enable all parts of the church to make more of the diaconal ministry whether embodied in deacons, priests or bishops.
- There is a need to strengthen collegiality and build upon the solid base for the diaconate that already exists within the Church of England.

### **For the Methodist Church**

- There are hopes for further convergence in theology and practice, and towards living out the mission of God.
- There is a hope that when the Methodist Church further articulates its understanding of the diaconate, there is an explicit (rather than implicit) relationship of diaconal ministry to the ministry of the Word and to worship.
- The Methodist Church is encouraged to continue wrestling with the relationship between the orders of ministry as understood within the Methodist Church and the three-fold order exemplified in the Church of England and which prevails so widely in the universal Church.

23. In conclusion, the diverse understandings of our callings are rooted in the rich histories and traditions of our Churches. Understanding the differences is a treasure to the dialogue between the Church of England and the Methodist Church and it can only ever help deepen the melody that is composed, as we all offer our ministries in God's world.

## APPENDIX 2

### METHODIST AND ANGLICAN RESPONSES TO THE JIC QUINQUENNIAL REPORT *EMBRACING THE COVENANT*

#### The Methodist Faith and Order Committee

1. In March 2010 the Methodist Church Faith and Order Committee produced a formal response to *Embracing the Covenant*. It concluded that the report (including its proposals and particular recommendations) contains nothing that either contradicts or is inconsistent with the teaching of the Methodist Church as expressed in its doctrinal standards, together with the adopted statements and resolutions of the Conference.
2. The Committee commended the move to extend the scope of the Covenant by involving the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales in the work of the JIC. It also commended the intention of the JIC to look for points of convergence in other conversations and feed those insights into the Covenant process, looking for example at the Anglican and the Methodist international dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission, and the Methodist-Episcopal dialogue in the United States.
3. In commenting on the JIC proposals about Eucharistic practice, the Committee recommended that ‘for the sake of the Covenant, Anglicans and Methodists should explore whether it is possible to articulate a common theology of Christian symbolism that provides for legitimate diversity in worship, liturgy, sacred space and those other elements that shape the respective ethos of the two traditions’. In speaking of who may preside at the eucharist, the Committee helpfully pointed to a need to clarify the relationship of presbyteral or priestly ministry to diaconal ministry, and the nature of presbyteral ministry to the ministry of the whole people of God.

4. The Committee went on to note a potential development in the understanding of the goal of the Covenant from ‘organic unity’ to ‘full visible communion’. It asked whether these are indeed equivalents, and suggested that the institutional implications of each might be different. It also asked for more work on what type of relationship is being identified in calling it a Covenant, commenting: ‘How the New Covenant in Christ and the proposed Covenant among the churches of the Anglican Communion may each contribute to understanding the nature of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant requires further investigation.’ The Committee also asked for further work on how missiology informs the way that Methodists and Anglicans understand the nature of the Church and its ministerial structures.
5. The Committee concluded that subject to the detailed observations made in its commentary, it affirms both the intent and direction of *Embracing the Covenant* as consistent with the vision, hopes and expectations of the Methodist Church insofar as these are expressed in the *Common Statement*. In *Embracing the Covenant* the JIC had reported that more could be done within existing ecclesial structures and provisions to implement the commitments of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant and then made a number of practical recommendations that it believed would facilitate the development of the Covenant to its full potential. From a Faith and Order perspective, the Committee judged that there was no doctrinal reason why the Methodist Church should not accept all or some of these recommendations, subject to the Conference agreeing that they are in the best interest of the Covenant.
6. The Committee also concluded that the most significant and far-reaching proposal in *Embracing the Covenant* was for the creation of a Methodist episcopate within the historic episcopate in the form of a President-bishop. Whatever the merits or demerits of this proposal, the Committee concluded that it is possible to state unequivocally that it neither contradicts nor is inconsistent with the teaching of the Methodist Church concerning the nature of *episkope* and the ordained ministry, though it identified a number of issues that need to be further investigated, not least whether the *episkope* of a ‘bishop in synod’ in the Church of England and that of a President-bishop in the Methodist Church would sufficiently

resemble each other to provide a sufficient basis in principle for an interchangeable ordained ministry.

### **Other Connexional Responses from the Methodist Church**

7. In July 2008, the Methodist Conference requested the Methodist Council to consider the report *Embracing the Covenant* and to ensure that it was studied in appropriate ways in Districts, circuits and local churches. The Conference also requested responses from the Methodist Faith and Order Committee and the Methodist Law and Polity Committee. The F&O response is summarised above, the L&P committee raised no major questions at this stage.
8. The Methodist Council gave a considered response, as did 5 Districts of 8 that were requested. These were Bristol, Leeds, Scotland, Wales, York and Hull. Six of 20 circuits requested responded, ie Ilfracombe and Barnstaple, Thirsk and Northallerton, Telford, Milton Keynes, Central Sussex and Manchester. Ten individual responses were also received.
9. The reports received were of varying length and depth. Many were responding to general issues in the relationship between the Church of England and the Methodist Church and did not specifically centre on '*Embracing the Covenant*'.
10. The reports were assessed qualitatively and the comments have been grouped under 6 headings:
  - 10.1 *Local Covenant relationships.*

Local mission initiatives are important and, as local projects, are often easier to work on jointly. The attitudes of local clergy have a significant impact on local relationships. Collaboration is often easier in rural areas. Joint Local Preacher/Reader training should be developed and their shared ministry encouraged.
  - 10.2 *Structural issues/differences.*

Culture, structures, boundaries and legal status all make covenant working difficult. Regulations for ecumenical cooperation should be made more permissive

10.3 *Connexional Issues.*

Relationships with other denominations tend to complicate relationships within the Covenant. Scottish and Welsh dimensions must be considered. The relevance of the JIC's work to local situations was queried – 'mission is local, ecumenism is national'. Joint training of LP/Readers and ordained ministers should be encouraged.

10.4 *Unity and Diversity.*

Structural unity of the two churches seems a distant goal. The future needs to be one of 'reconciled diversity'. Mission rather than structural unity is important.

10.5 *Episcope and Episcopacy.*

There is Methodist resistance, especially to a diocesan model of episcopacy. The role of women is of paramount importance to Methodists. The JIC's proposal for a President-Bishop is often not fully understood.

10.6 *Faith and Order issues raised.*

Issues where more clarification and work is needed to reach agreement include episcopacy, interchangeability of ordained ministries, confirmation and Holy Communion.

11. Here are some examples of collaboration from responses received:

*Ilfracombe and Barnstaple.*

'The more people do together the more they understand each other and with a Covenant the final plunge of an ecumenical church reminds one of the T shirt slogan 'Just do it'. The rewards are very great, each denomination enriching the other'.

*Milton Keynes:*

'Most joint mission activities to date have been focussed on social needs.... and raise no problems in ecumenical cooperation'.

*Central Sussex;*

'All those who spoke .... articulated their deeply-held convictions

in a mature and sensitive way that showed how the subject of ecumenism continues to be important in the lives of Christians’.

*Thirsk and Northallerton:*

‘we have recognised that despite national covenants and even District /Diocesan Covenants, it is only the local Circuit/Deanery Covenant that has made such a relationship ‘real’. ... the local covenant is of great importance for our mutual ministry and the mission of our two traditions in this area.’

## **Diocesan responses from the Church of England**

12. In July 2008 the General Synod requested that Bishops Councils consider *Embracing the Covenant* and refer it to more specialised bodies within the diocese. Responses were received from the following dioceses: St Albans, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Manchester, Worcester, Bradford, London, Coventry, Portsmouth, Truro, Lichfield, Exeter, Canterbury, Peterborough, Sheffield, Ripon and Leeds, Sodor and Man, and York.
13. The reports are of varying length and depth. They essentially reported what was happening locally in the diocese. There were very few comments directly on the report ‘*Embracing the Covenant*’. Most responses concentrate on practical co-operation and by-pass theological factors. Most contain encouraging evidence of joint initiatives and established patterns of collaboration. Several reports highlight Fresh Expressions as a promising joint initiative. Some seem to think that the Covenant is all about Local Ecumenical Partnerships. One or two raise the issue of alignment of boundaries. The issue of the interchangeability of ordained ministries is seldom referred to.
14. The reports were assessed qualitatively and the comments can be grouped under 4 headings:
  - 14.1 *Local collaboration* .  
Several dioceses reported on their LEPs and gave good examples of collaborative ministry. Single-congregation LEPs can however feel isolated and insecure. Other than LEPs , many felt that

cooperation between Anglicans and Methodists was very patchy. Several highlighted Fresh Expressions projects as promising joint initiatives and an impetus to covenant relationships.

14.2 *Awareness of the Covenant.*

Although several dioceses had Joint Covenant Working Parties with local Methodists, and there was good cooperation between bishops and Methodist leaders, more encouragement was needed. The Covenant often seemed to be an afterthought in regular day to day church life.

14.3 *Issues preventing covenant relationships.*

Several reports outlined the differences between the organisation and culture of the two Churches, leading to difficulties in joint decision-making and difficulties over boundaries. Some saw the work of the JIC as being too theoretical, more guidance was needed in the application of the Ecumenical Canons.

14.4 *Important Faith and Order Issues.*

Very few such matters were raised, but mention was made of the need for the interchangeability of ordained ministries, joint lay training, more eucharistic hospitality and sharing, and some form of 'full visible communion'.

15. Here are some typical examples of joint working, culled from the reports of 5 dioceses:

*St Albans*

A joint Diocesan/District (Beds, Essex and Herts) Synod was held in January 2006 particularly to discuss Fresh Expressions, itself an Anglican-Methodist joint initiative. This was widely regarded as successful, but has turned out to be a one-off event. There is an annual meeting between Circuit Superintendents and Rural Deans, attended also by the District Chair and the relevant Suffragan Bishop and Archdeacon(s). The Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee includes a Methodist representative. He has also participated in the group managing the Diocesan Review of Deanery Structures and Boundaries. Three successful Fresh Expression Vision Days have been run by local Anglicans and



Methodists in North Herts, Luton and Watford. It is evident from these days that there is a strong desire amongst local Christians to explore fresh ways of doing mission and new ways of being church; what is also clear is that there is an equally strong desire to do this together.

#### *St Edmundsbury and Ipswich*

The Chair of House of Clergy in the Diocesan Synod surveyed the 19 deaneries to put together a picture of what is happening, while the Lay Chair is in touch with Deanery Lay Chairs. A Joint Steering Group, chaired by an Archdeacon, is planning a regional conference in a couple of years, with a special focus on Fresh Expressions.

#### *Manchester*

The 2008 Archdeacon's Articles of Enquiry included a question on the Covenant. 75% of Anglican parishes reported minimal contact with Methodist colleagues either on a social level or in terms of joint worship, let alone joint mission. In addition to the Nexus/Sanctus1 Fresh Expression of church, the Fresh Expressions area Strategic Team (FEAST) together with the course on Mission Shaped Intro and Mission Shaped Ministry has been an excellent partnership with the Methodists Districts and now includes the URC. The diocese reported that they discerned a slow but sure change of culture, so that working in partnership with one another across the two denominations is becoming second nature. The major obstacles to joint mission were mismatched structures. Cultural differences regarding who has authority and how decisions are taken is often not understood. Some would say that the structures and organisations appear incompatible with differing boundaries and radically different ways of deploying stipendiary ministers. The diocese commented that it made sense to incorporate the URC more into these discussions, while recognising the unique history and the Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

#### *Coventry*

The diocese requested the JIC to encourage the Dioceses' Commission and equivalent body in the Methodist Church to work

towards a better alignment of boundaries between Dioceses and Districts.

### *Truro*

Much of the ecumenical activity in Cornwall is channelled through the local 'Churches Together' groups. In the more rural areas this may well consist of Anglicans and Methodist but in the towns there is a wider involvement. There is a strong 'social' agenda: Drop-in Centres, Street Pastors, Food Banks, Youth activity, Kidz Clubs, Breakfast projects, Childrens' Workers, etc., and alongside this there are Bible Study Groups, Prayer Groups, Chaplaincies and lay training programmes. Many communities have a pattern of joint worship, maybe once a month. Churches Together groups are patchy. More local Covenant relationships in communities are needed.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **MEMBERSHIP OF JIC 2**

#### **Anglican**

The Right Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry  
(Co-Chair)

The Venerable Janet Henderson, Archdeacon of Richmond

The Revd Dr Will Adam

Dr Philip Giddings

The Revd Jonathan Baker

The Revd Canon William Croft (Consultant)

The Revd Dr Bernard Sixtus (Church in Wales)

The Revd Canon Prof John Richardson (Scottish Episcopal Church)

The Revd Canon Dr Paul Avis (Co-Convenor)

#### **Methodist**

Professor Peter Howdle, Vice-President of the Conference 2002-3,  
(Co-Chair)

Mr Steven Cooper

The Revd Catherine Gale (Wales)

Mrs Jenny Easson (Scotland)

The Revd Ruth Gee

Deacon Sue Culver

The Revd Neil Stubbens

The Revd Dr Peter Phillips (Consultant)

The Revd Kenneth Howcroft (Co-Convenor)

#### **United Reformed Church**

The Revd David Tatem (Observer-Participant)

