

*** 10 years since signing of historic Covenant**

The Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) of the Church of England and Methodist Church in Britain has called for "Church leaders and decision-making bodies to make the Covenant a priority in order to bring our Churches closer together in mission and holiness."

In a major Report published this week the JIC calls on both Churches to consider the impact that the 10-year-old Anglican Methodist Covenant has made on their relationship; to rejoice in the progress that has been made; and to face together the challenges of mission.

The Report, entitled "The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness", provides numerous examples of where the Churches have worked well together over the past 10 years, including areas of education, ethical investment, mission, theological education, safeguarding and Fresh Expressions. There are now 533 local ecumenical partnerships between Anglicans and Methodists across the country. However, the Report also identifies a number of continuing challenges, such as the need for further collaboration, consultation and decision making at both national and local levels.

In setting out new ways of future working, a Quick Guide to the Report urges "Church leaders and decision-making bodies to make the Covenant a priority in order to bring our churches closer together". It also expresses the need for "local Anglicans and Methodists to worship and work together more closely to make the Covenant 'real'." It states that "We are called to holiness and to be sent on mission in the world. Our unity is an essential part of that. When we are not one our faith and mission are seriously compromised".

Jointly launching the report today, Professor Peter Howdle, the Methodist Co-Chair of the JIC, said: *"We are pleased to present this Report. The JIC sees many signs that the Covenant between our two Churches has strengthened during this period. However, there is still a long way to go before our two churches are acting, and are seen as acting, together in visible unity for the mission of the church.*

I believe both churches will need to act ever more graciously towards each other as they seek to overcome the obstacles which prevent a deepening of our Covenant relationship. Our Report challenges our churches to greater efforts in their search for this visible unity."

The Church of England Co-Chair, the Bishop of Coventry, the Rt Revd. Christopher Cocksworth said:

"John Wesley's passion and project to 'reform the nation...and to spread scriptural holiness over the land' is in urgent need of renewal. This important Report challenges the Church of England and the Methodist Church to work wherever possible in common purpose and to take definite steps towards a common life in Christ, and in his ministry and mission."

The Report notes the outstanding questions preventing even closer working and highlights the JIC's hopes that progress towards visible unity in mission and holiness will not involve one Church being absorbed by the other. "We have common roots and shared history," states the Quick

Guide. "Yet we are very different culturally and structurally. We do not match each other in the ways we are organised. These difficulties are sometimes the source of misunderstanding and frustration, but they can also be the source of much enrichment and rejoicing."

The JIC is inviting feedback on the findings of the Report. Over the next few months, the various national and connexional bodies of the two Churches will be reflecting on the Report in order to discern how to move forward into the next phase of the Covenant journey. Comments and submissions are being invited by 31 January 2014. The JIC will then bring proposals for the next phase of implementation of the Covenant to the General Synod and the Methodist Conference in July 2014.

The JIC Report: "The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness" , the Quick Guide and a Draft Report to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod in 2014 will be available for download from 6th September at: <http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/>

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Notes:

- The Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) was first established by resolution of the General Synod and Methodist Conference in 2003, and was charged to monitor the implementation of the Covenant and to undertake further work to remove obstacles to visible unity. The first five yearly report was published in 2008 (Embracing the Covenant). In its second phase the JIC has included Anglican and Methodist representatives from Wales and Scotland.
- Alongside the Report: *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, the JIC is also publishing this week a Draft Report to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod in 2014, which outlines what steps need to be taken to meet the challenges identified in the Report. The JIC will bring a revised version of this document, including proposals for the next phase of implementation of the Covenant, to the General Synod and Methodist Conference in July 2014. In addition, a Quick Guide accompanying the Report provides an introduction to the material in both reports.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/church-england-and-methodist-church-moving-closer-unity>