

## GENERAL SYNOD

***Mission and Ministry in Covenant:***  
**Report on work to address areas for further reflection**

**Summary**

The motion passed by the General Synod in February this year regarding *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* asked the Faith and Order Commission to report back on progress in July. This paper summarizes key developments that have taken place in the intervening months.

The Commission has worked with the Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee to review the Synod debate in February and set up a group to address areas for further reflection arising from the initial response to *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* in both churches. The report sets out relevant background, membership of the group, outcomes and outputs, and a provisional timescale for completion of its work. It invites Synod members to contact the group if they would like to draw its attention to particular points.

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**Background**

1. On Friday 9th February 2018, after an address by invitation of the Presidents of Synod from two senior Methodist presbyters, the Revd Ruth Gee and the Revd Gareth Powell, and a debate that lasted close to an hour and a half, the General Synod passed the following motion:

That this Synod:

(a) welcome the report *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* (GS 2086), produced by the faith and order bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church in response to resolutions passed by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference in 2014;

(b) call on the Faith and Order Commission to report back to the Synod at the next group of sessions on work carried out jointly with the Methodist Church to address the areas for further reflection outlined at paragraphs 26-29 of the covering note from the Faith and Order Commission to GS 2086;

(c) invite the Faith and Order Commission, in consultation with the Methodist Church, to explore and elucidate further the relationship between episcopal ordination and eucharistic presidency, as this touches on the full visible unity of our two churches; and

(d) affirm its confident hope that any outstanding issues between our churches may be resolved quickly and satisfactorily and look forward to the day when, on the basis of work already completed and accepted, our ministries will be fully reconciled.

2. The original motion had consisted only of parts (a) and (b). Part (c) was an amendment proposed by the Bishop of Portsmouth, and part (d) an amendment proposed by the Revd Sharon Jones, both members of the Council for Christian Unity. Following a call

for a vote by Houses, the numbers of those who voted on the amended motion were recorded as follows:

Bishops: 35 for with two against and no abstentions

Clergy: 131 for, with 23 against and 13 abstentions

Laity: 124 for, with 34 against and 11 abstentions.

3. The Faith and Order Commission reviewed the Synod debate carefully at its meeting later in February. Terms of Reference for a group to take forward the work asked for in parts (b) and (c) of the motion were discussed initially by the co-chairs of the new group following their appointment by the two churches; they were then reviewed at a joint meeting of the two churches' faith and order bodies in May. The joint meeting also considered a substantial paper on the issues that had been identified for further reflection on the part of the Church of England by debate at the House of Bishops and at the General Synod. The paper summarised where there was relevant material in texts already produced, offered some analysis of critical questions and made suggestions about how the group might focus its task.
4. The Methodist Conference will hold a debate in July this year (prior to the General Synod sessions) on a motion parallel to that debated by the General Synod in February regarding *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*.

## **Membership**

5. It was agreed from the outset that the group would need to have a balance of Anglican and Methodist members. On the side of the Church of England, it would be important to encompass something of the range of views within the House of Bishops in particular, as well as other voices. At the same time, the group would need to include relevant expertise in theology and ecumenism to fulfil its remit. Some attention should be given to the wider ecumenical context, and to the potential implications for other church relationships.
6. Initial membership of the group is as follows:

### *Church of England*

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave, Bishop of Lichfield (co-chair)  
The Rt Revd Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport  
The Revd Dr Jamie Hawkey, Dean of Clare College, Cambridge  
Ms Lucy Moore, member of the House of Laity  
The Rt Revd Martin Seeley, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

### *Methodist Church*

The Revd Ruth Gee, Chair of the Darlington District and past President of Conference (Co-Chair)  
The Revd Dr David Chapman, Chair of the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District  
The Revd Dr Jane Leach, Principal, Wesley House, Cambridge  
Professor Judith Lieu, Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge.

The group will be supported by the secretaries to the two churches' faith and order bodies, the Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen (Church of England) and the Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt (Methodist Church).

## Outcomes and outputs

7. The following outcomes for the group's work were identified by the faith and order bodies at their joint meeting in May:
  - the Church of England's House of Bishops is satisfied that the areas of concern it raised in December 2017 have been properly explored and elucidated, and is therefore able to decide on whether to ask the Business Committee of the General Synod for a debate on a motion initiating legislation that would implement the proposals outlined in *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*;
  - debate on such a motion at the Church of England's General Synod can be informed by material offering a thorough exploration and elucidation of the points identified in parts (b) and (c) of the motion it passed in February 2018;
  - the Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee agrees that the further work directed by the Methodist Conference in July 2018 has been satisfactorily completed, and is therefore able to prepare a report for the 2019 Conference.
8. In terms of output, it is expected that the group will prepare substantial documentation that needs to be scrutinised by the two faith and order bodies and then presented for discussion at the House of Bishops, prior to eventual publication and circulation to members of the General Synod and the Conference.
9. The documentation will need to address clearly the three main areas identified in the Synod motion and the question it notes about eucharistic presidency and episcopal ordination, as well as any work that the Methodist Conference so directs. It will need to set out where it believes there is within each church substantial consensus on key points that could be affirmed, where there is a range of views or possibilities that may be considered, and where there are deep disagreements that need to be faced. At the same time, it is hoped that it may also be able to explore some creative responses to points of difficulty that have been identified in the reception of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*.

## Timescale

10. While part (b) of the Synod motion asked for the Faith and Order Commission to report back to the Synod in July 2018, it set no timescale for the completion of the work it asked for. The probable need for a two-year period between the passing of an initial motion requesting relevant legislation and a final approval debate means that any legislative process is now unlikely to be completed within the current Quinquennium of the General Synod.
11. The faith and order bodies do not envisage that the tasks of 'reflection', exploration and elucidation called for in the motion passed in February should take more than a year. The Synod did not ask, for instance, for fresh proposals to be developed. They therefore anticipate that it may be possible to present the Synod with further documentation on the matters raised in February 2019, so that the Synod can then

form a view on whether to proceed to legislation. If it was decided to do so, a parallel debate could be scheduled to take place at the Methodist Conference (which only meets once a year) in summer 2019.

### **Contacting the group**

12. Synod members who wish to draw the group's attention to particular points for relevance for its work are welcome to contact the Church of England staff member supporting the group, Dr Jeremy Worthen, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Theology, as well as its co-chair, the Bishop of Lichfield.

The Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth  
Bishop of Coventry  
Chair, Faith and Order Commission

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