

GENERAL SYNOD**Mission and Ministry in Covenant****Report on further work from faith and order bodies of the Church of England
and the Methodist Church****Introduction**

1. The faith and order bodies have completed their report on the work they were asked to undertake by the Conference and the General Synod.

Overview

2. A background paper explains the work that has been undertaken by the faith and order bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church on the areas for further attention identified by the General Synod and then subsequently the Methodist Conference at their initial debates in 2018 on *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*. The agreed text of their joint report on this work is then provided for consideration by the General Synod.
3. The background paper focuses on the recommendations at the end of the report. The motion for this item from the Faith and Order Commission combines a clause to initiate the process of preparing the legislation needed to implement the proposals of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* with clauses supporting these recommendations and asking for work on them to proceed in tandem with the legislative process. The Faith and Order Commission believes that these two dimensions of the process need to go forward together. Work on the recommendations will provide crucial context for work on the legislation, and progress in preparing legislation for the Church of England is needed to give both confidence and shape to what will necessarily be joint work with the Methodist Church.
4. For a summary of the content of the new report from the faith and order bodies, please see paragraphs 7 and 8 of its Introduction, following the background paper below.

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Bishop of Coventry

Chair, Faith and Order Commission

June 2019

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BACKGROUND

1. In their initial debates on *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* in 2018 (available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/mission-and-ministry-in-covenant.pdf>), both the General Synod and the Methodist Conference identified areas for further work that overlapped significantly without being identical. These are set out in the Introduction to the report below, which then explains how the document as a whole seeks to address them.
2. The report was drafted by a joint subgroup appointed by the two faith and order bodies. The co-chairs were the Bishop of Lichfield and the Revd Ruth Gee, a former President of the Methodist Conference. The other members from the Church of England were the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the Bishop of Stockport, the Revd Canon Dr James Hawkey (an expert in Anglican ecumenism) and Ms Lucy Moore.
3. The Church of England membership was chosen to reflect something of the diversity of responses to *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* within the House of Bishops and in the Church of England more widely. The Faith and Order Commission remains conscious that this diversity includes a wide spectrum from enthusiastic support to deep reservation. Moreover, for different people there are different and not necessarily convergent concerns about the proposals.
4. The report was discussed at the meeting of the House of Bishops in May. The work of the joint subgroup and of the faith and order bodies was welcomed, with some elements that could be clearly affirmed, such as the clear delineation of **reconciliation of ministries as a distinct stage** that is needed after recognition of ministries. A number of points were also identified where some felt that more could still be done to enable a wider range of people within the Church of England to support the proposals with confidence. Some of these are noted later in this background paper.
5. There was not a consensus within the House of Bishops on whether to go forward with the proposals. A majority agreed, however, that it was now right to test the mind of the General Synod on this matter in formal debate.
6. The report below represents some significant agreement by the faith and order bodies on the issues they were asked to address by the Methodist Conference and the General Synod in 2018. The most important points of that agreement can be identified from the recommendations that appear at the end of the document. The first four in particular are pivotal for how the faith and order bodies have responded to matters raised by the House of Bishops and by the General Synod in their initial reception of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*. The fifth, on diaconal ministry, relates to an issue identified by the Methodist Conference, which is not to say that it is not also of interest and concern to the Church of England.
7. The **first recommendation** is as follows:
 - i. The ‘formal declaration’ envisaged by *MMiC* at §10, referred to as the ‘first step’ towards a new relationship of communion, should include a commitment to seeking what this document terms the ‘reconciliation of structures’, to enable our churches to act and speak as one church where this serves the mission of God (paragraphs 10–22).

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The concept of '**reconciliation of structures**' emerged within the joint subgroup as a way of mediating between two apparently divergent concerns regarding the area for further work identified as 'the journey towards unity'. One concern was that ecclesial communion, with interchangeability of ordained ministries, but leaving the separate structures of the two churches wholly unchanged, would become – intentionally or by benign neglect – the end point of the Covenant journey. This could undermine the more ambitious and more fruitful goal of 'organic unity' that was identified in the 2003 Covenant. On the other hand, there was also a concern that it would be neither possible nor desirable at this point to set out where the journey to fuller unity beyond ecclesial communion should take our churches, including possible changes to structures of oversight and authority. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* had followed the approach set out by the Joint Implementation Commission during the decade of its appointment in seeing ecclesial communion as a stage on the journey to unity, not a terminus, and a stage that would be both an expression of trust that we are called to fuller unity and an opportunity to build the trust needed for us to travel further together.

8. In the course of its work, the joint subgroup became especially conscious of the importance of **the Methodist Church's relationship with three Anglican churches** – not just one – in seeking fuller unity. The report notes continuing consultation with the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church, with a second formal meeting of representatives from all four churches in December last year. The view among those present was that not only the proposals themselves but also the provisional timetable for them should pose no particular problems for these two churches should they wish to pursue parallel initiatives in their own relationships with the Methodist Church. One might imagine three convergent agreements, between the Methodist Church and the three Anglican churches in Britain, being finalised together in 2022. It may be helpful to know that the Methodist Council has now agreed to invite the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales to conversations about their relationships with the Methodist Church in the light of the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* proposals.
9. This first recommendation is significant, therefore, in expressing a commitment to attend to structures of oversight and authority in our churches so that our reconciliation can be expressed in our institutional relationships and so that we can act and speak as *one* church for the sake of the mission of God. It signals clearly that we will continue to press for a fuller unity that involves transformation of our structures, while also respecting the need to walk forward together one step at a time, giving space for the horizon to clear and for trust to grow along the way. The desire for everything to be decided before we can go forward at all is understandable at one level but unrealistic when it comes to any significant adventure in human relationships, though the importance of keeping focus on the end goal remains.
10. The **second recommendation** states:
 - ii. The planning of an inaugural joint service or services of Holy Communion, to take place following from the acceptance of the proposals in both churches and the ordination of the first President-Bishop, should make appropriate space for repentance for past sins, for the welcoming of one another's gifts and graces and for the commissioning of the churches

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for mission together, to include a specific episcopal commissioning of all ordained ministers in each church for readiness to serve in and with the other (paragraphs 23–32, 40–50 and 52–54).

While *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* had commented on the desirability of some kind of inaugural service, this recommendation goes much further in identifying key features of it, while leaving open the question of how many services there should be. The faith and order bodies agreed that such a service should both express and enable what it is that we understand to be happening in our churches entering into a relationship of ecclesial communion. The close familial relationship in ecclesial terms between the Church of England and the Methodist Church has been marked over two and a half centuries by estrangement, suspicion and misunderstanding, through which both churches have been diminished and disfigured. There is therefore a need to recognise the sins of the past to which we in the present have also made our contributions, and to repent of them formally and publicly. At the same time, there also needs to be a positive welcome for what God has given to each of us in our distinctiveness, and a willingness to learn and receive from one another so that we may serve God in our nation more fruitfully together in the future.

11. The idea of ‘a specific episcopal commissioning of all ordained ministers in each church for readiness to serve in and with the other’ is one element in the report’s response to the concern identified in the Bishop of Portsmouth’s amendment to the original motion at the February 2018 sessions of General Synod, regarding the norm in Anglican ecclesiology that a person who presides at the eucharist has been ordained as a priest by a bishop in the historic episcopate. Methodist presbyters already serving before the two churches came into communion would have been ordained under the *episkope* of the Conference, but it would not be appropriate that they should be episcopally ordained at that point given (a) what both churches have affirmed about one another’s ordained ministries in the 2003 Covenant and (b) the rejection in both churches of ‘re-ordination’, ministers being understood to be ordained once and unrepeatably to an order in the Church of God, not a denomination only.
12. The question remains, however, of how those who were ordained in a church without the historic episcopate as a sign of apostolicity come into **relationship with the episcopate** when their church receives that sign. There is an additional, if related, question as to how those already ordained in each church come into relationship with the episcopate in the other church in which they may at some point serve. Hence the inclusion in this recommendation of an ‘episcopal commissioning’ by bishops from both churches of ‘all ordained ministers’.
13. The **third recommendation** is in part connected with this point:
 - iii. Where a minister ordained in one church is accepted to serve also in the other for the first time, a service of welcome should be held, to include prayer and appropriate liturgical action as fitting to the polity of each church (paragraph 51).

There is a shared need in both churches to mark the ecclesial as well as personal significance of such a moment. In the Church of England, the proper person to officiate at such a service of welcome would be the licensing bishop – a second and more personal opportunity to express the new relationship

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between presbyter and bishop, and one that would continue to apply to presbyters ordained by a bishop in the Methodist Church. As the report explains, such a service would include ‘appropriate forms of prayer and liturgical action that express participation in the one apostolic ministry of word and sacrament in the mission of the church in the local environment’ (paragraph 51).

14. The **fourth recommendation** relates most closely to the first:

iv. A ‘Council event’ should be arranged to take place soon after the inaugural service, to mark the new stage on the Covenant journey, set it in the context of joint mission and service to the world and advise the churches on how the new relationship between them might best be sustained and deepened (paragraphs 55–56).

This was a practical proposal that emerged from discussions within the joint subgroup, in part in response to the same concern noted above that a new stage in the journey of unity between our churches should not become an end state. It also reflects the shared concern within the subgroup – supported by the faith and order bodies – that the proposals of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* need to be set firmly in the context of a common calling to serve the people of England and to share the gospel with them. Questions of ‘reconciliation of structures’ should be addressed in the light of a serious engagement with what that common calling means for our two churches and how they may be being asked to change in order to respond to it. Similarly, an inaugural service must not become inward looking: reconciliation and reception of gifts should have as their constant horizon the **missional imperative** addressed to both of us by Christ, and prayer by bishops for other clergy should be a commissioning for service that is ready to cross denominational boundaries for the sake of responding to God’s call.

15. There is much else in the report below not covered in the recommendations that directly addresses issues raised in initial discussions of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* within the Church of England. This would include the first section in Part B, on ‘The President-Bishop in the Methodist Church’, where three of the four sub-sections respond to questions that were formulated in reflection on those discussions. In this context, it is important for both churches to understand that what the Church of England is asking of the Methodist Church is that it come to share in the historic episcopate as the gift of Christ to the whole church of Christ and part of what Anglicans would call ‘catholic order’. It is not a matter of the Methodist Church having bishops who function in the same way as Church of England bishops. There is therefore a need to distinguish which features of episcopacy belong to the historic episcopate as such, and which are open to local adaptation (to use the terminology of the Lambeth Quadrilateral).

16. This section includes some discussion of how episcopal collegiality might be fostered between bishops from the two churches. One potentially significant suggestion is made at paragraph 85 regarding the College of Bishops: ‘Were those ordained as bishops in the Methodist Church to join with members of the Church of England College of Bishops, that would constitute a new episcopal college comprising bishops from both churches. This could become a significant context not just for fellowship, support and mutual learning, but also for imagining together how episcopal ministry in both churches might be transformed through new ecclesial relations for the sake of unity in mission.’

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17. In discussions at the House of Bishops, it was suggested that it would be helpful for the Methodist Church to share with the Church of England a draft ordination service for bishops before completion of the legislative process. If the convergence that already exists in the ordination services of the two churches for presbyters and deacons were mirrored in the Methodist Church's ordination service for bishops, that would give further assurance of the consonance of understanding in the two churches regarding episcopal ministry.
18. The third section in Part B, on 'Welcoming one Another's Presbyters / Priests', contains much detailed exploration of the new opportunities that would be created in a wide range of contexts at local level and of the questions that might be raised as churches seek to benefit from them. Taken together, the scenarios confirm both the significance of moving into a new stage of ecclesial communion as well as some of the limitations that would accompany it – the 'grit' that will help to ensure that our churches do not become too comfortable in the initial form this may take but keep seeking ways to deepen trust, reconciliation and sharing in mission on the way to the fullness of unity to which God calls us.
19. This section deals with a number of practical topics that would be important in taking the proposals forward, including the question of ministerial discipline for a person serving or able to serve in two different churches. The need for careful attention to such matters is reflected in the reference in the motion to work on drafting the 'guidelines' recommended in the final paragraph of the section. On the part of the Church of England, there is a particular issue about protecting the 'permissive' character of the proposals in a way that is consistent with relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010. The envisaged Church of England legislation will need to ensure that parishes who would find themselves unable to make use of the new possibilities for interchangeability of ministry are free not to do so. Within the House of Bishops, the question has also been raised of what might happen in the case of Methodist presbyters who wish to receive ordination from a bishop within the historic episcopate in the context of ecclesial communion between our churches.
20. The Faith and Order Commission believes that the faith and order bodies have completed the work that was asked of them by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference in 2018, and that their report on that work should now be made available to resource further discussion in the churches. Of course, much more could be said on these matters; indeed, much more has been said in documents that are already available, including the work of the Joint Implementation Commission in this country, the international dialogue between Anglicans and Methodists and the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission for Unity Faith and Order. As the motion makes clear, **continuing attention to 'faith and order' matters** will be necessary alongside the process of **preparing and scrutinising legislation**, should the General Synod decide to move towards implementation of the proposals of discussion of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*. The report below is, however, virtually the same length as *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* itself; many more words are unlikely to create much more light. Almost five years after the General Synod and the Methodist Conference first asked for proposals on interchangeability to be formulated, it is time for those bodies to decide whether they wish to take forward the proposals they received more than a year ago, and, if so, on what terms.

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21. Finally, in asking the General Synod – including the House of Bishops – to take a view on the direction that should be taken with the proposals of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* in light of the further work it has undertaken jointly with the Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee, the Faith and Order Commission recognizes that one possible outcome would be that the Church of England is not able to support such proposals at this point. That would be a difficult outcome not just for the Covenant relationship with the Methodist Church but also for hopes of progress towards fuller visible unity in relationships with other churches not currently ordered in the historic episcopate; if that door cannot be opened with our nearest neighbour from that church family, it would appear to be very firmly bolted indeed when it comes to its other members, despite what we may have said about our desire to open it. It would be still worse, however, if that outcome did not yield any clarity as to what the critical factors were in the decision, and the extent to which they would also have a bearing on other initiatives for Christian unity, including relationships covered by Synodical agreements that include commitments to seeking interchangeability of ordained ministries.

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ANNEX: REPORT FROM THE FAITH AND ORDER BODIES

MISSION AND MINISTRY IN COVENANT:

Areas for further reflection identified by the General Synod of the Church of England and the Methodist Conference

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INTRODUCTION

1. This document has been prepared by the faith and order bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church in response to the initial reception of their report, *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* (hereafter *MMiC*), in the two churches, including the debates at the General Synod in February 2018 and at the Methodist Conference in July 2018. It is intended to comment on the main issues that have arisen from discussion of the proposals in *MMiC*, in order to assist the churches in coming to decisions about how they will respond to them. It is not a 'stand-alone' document and needs to be read alongside the original report, which itself builds on a series of earlier texts arising from dialogue between our churches over many years, including the reports of the Joint Implementation Commission.
2. In February 2018, the Church of England's General Synod debated *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* and 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.
3. The 2018 Methodist Conference received a report from the Faith and Order Committee which included the text of *MMiC*. This enabled the Conference to debate *MMiC* and direct that further work be done. The Conference passed the following resolutions:
 - 33/1 The Conference received the Report.
 - 33/2 The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee to undertake further work on the issues identified in paragraph 6 of Part A of [its] report and bring its response to the 2019 Conference.
 - 33/3 The Conference further directed the Faith and Order Committee to include progress on work relating to the interchangeability of deacons in any further reports.

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4. Both the General Synod and the Methodist Conference endorsed recommendations from their church's faith and order body for further work on the proposals in *MMiC*. These recommendations were not identical but had much in common with one another. The areas to which they asked for attention to be given might be summarised as: 'the journey towards unity',¹ 'how the historic episcopate will be shared by the Methodist Church',² and 'the working out of interchangeability'.³ As the papers referred to explain, these are areas explicitly addressed in *MMiC*, though in the case of the first and third the treatment is relatively brief, and it became apparent in the initial reception of the report that more detail and clarification was being asked for by people in both churches.
5. Both the General Synod and the Methodist Conference also asked for attention to be given to an additional area. In the case of the Church of England, this was for '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.' In the case of the Methodist Church, it was for 'the Faith and Order Committee to include progress on work relating to the interchangeability of deacons in any further reports.'
6. The document that follows is divided into two main parts. Part A, 'On the Way to Unity', addresses questions that arise from reflection on the first area identified for further work by the papers from the faith and order bodies presented to the Conference and the General Synod, 'the journey towards unity', and on the additional area highlighted in the motion of the General Synod. Its particular focus is on the nature of the journey towards unity to which our churches have committed themselves, and on how we might move into a new relationship as churches in communion in a way that would carry confidence in new developments and bring fresh energy for mission.
7. The first section, 'Churches in communion', explores the relationship between ecclesial communion as proposed in *MMiC* and visible unity as the goal of the Covenant from the beginning. 'Reconciliation and the exchange of gifts' looks at two critical concepts for ecumenical theology that can enrich our understanding of the way forward for our churches. 'Episcopal ordination and eucharistic presidency' addresses the theological relationship between the reconciliation of

¹ GS 2086 paragraph 26 & The Mission and Ministry in Covenant Proposals (2018) Part A 6.3. The key passage from *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* itself occurs in chapter 1, at paragraphs 10–13. Relevant previous work on this area includes: *Common Statement*, 2003, section on 'Full Visible Unity'; *Embracing the Covenant*, 2008, 'The Unity We Have and the Unity We Seek'; *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, 2013, 'Overseeing the Way of Uniting in Mission', 'Developing Bonds of Communion' and 'Models for Uniting in Oversight'.

² GS 2086 paragraph 27 & The Mission and Ministry in Covenant Proposals (2018) Part A 6.4. This is the subject of chapter 2 of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*. Relevant previous work on this area in the public domain includes: *Embracing the Covenant*, 2008, 'Episkope and Episcopacy and our Churches in Covenant'; *Moving Forward in Covenant*, 2011, 'Episcopacy and the Two Churches' and 'Presidency and the Conference'; *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, 2013, and 'Signs of Continuity in Faith, Worship and Mission'.

³ GS 2086 paragraph 28 & The Mission and Ministry in Covenant Proposals (2018) Part A 6.5. There is some brief comment on this in paragraphs 84–89 and 94 of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*. Relevant previous work from the JIC includes *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, 2005, 'Towards the Interchangeability of Ordained Ministries'.

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churches and the reconciliation of ordained ministries, recognising how these have become disconnected in some responses to *MMiC*. In 'Beginning a new chapter', a number of threads are drawn together in some practical proposals for how the churches could inaugurate a new relationship as churches in communion for the sake of common mission.

8. Part B, 'Orders of Ministry and Sharing in Mission', then considers the three orders of ministry that would exist in both churches were the proposals to be adopted, exploring specific topics that have emerged from the reception process so far regarding the episcopate, the diaconate and the presbyterate. This represents material the faith and order bodies have prepared in response to the second and third areas identified for further work by the papers from the faith and order bodies presented to the Conference and the General Synod, 'how the historic episcopate will be shared by the Methodist Church' and 'the working out of interchangeability', and the additional subject of the diaconate as highlighted in the Conference resolutions. The final section in Part B looks carefully at some possible scenarios that might lead to a presbyter / priest from one church also serving in the other, to draw out the significant opportunities as well as some of the challenges.
9. Recommendations that emerge from the document are presented separately at the end.

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A. ON THE WAY TO UNITY

1. Churches in communion

10. Signed in 2003, *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*⁴ between the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Britain established a new relationship between the two churches, based on mutual affirmations and commitments to grow together in mission and holiness and make the unity of Christ's Church visible between them. The theological interweaving of those commitments was powerfully expressed in the final report from the second phase of the Joint Implementation Commission for the Covenant, published in 2014 [para. 8]:

As the Church is drawn deeper into that dynamic of divine life it reflects the glory of God to the world as it offers glory to God in its worship and mission. It offers the love of God to the world in witness and service as it allows itself to be formed and reformed by that same love, a love that is expressed in fellowship, *Koinonia*, with others. It spreads holiness in the world as it allows itself to be made holy, a holiness that is inseparable from sharing together in the life of Christ. As St Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 1:2, Christians in each place are made holy in Christ *and* called to live out that holiness through their connection to and in communion with those who call upon Christ in every place. Mission and holiness are inextricably linked with the visible unity of the Church.

11. One of the questions asked about the proposals in *MMiC* has been: where are they taking our churches? The report itself sets them clearly in the context of the commitment both churches have made to seek unity – 'organic unity' being the phrase that appears in the first commitment of the 2003 Covenant, though *MMiC* prefers to speak of 'full visible unity'. *MMiC* makes it clear that becoming churches in communion would not achieve the goal of visible unity but would be a very significant step towards it. What would visible unity look like, however, for our churches? Are we still committed to seeking it – do we even still want it? And would the proposals really take us much closer to it, or send us down a kind of cul-de-sac in which the changes in fact needed to arrive at visible unity would actually be harder to achieve?
12. There has been long-standing debate within ecumenism about the nature of the unity we are seeking, and more recently about the relationship between 'unity' and 'communion'. Communion between churches has a critical role in framing the proposals of *MMiC* from the first chapter onwards: being able to receive one another's ordained ministries would constitute a new dimension to the relationship our churches already have, in which they would become fully in communion with one another. Yet differences would remain that kept them at a distance from one another and inhibited common action in mission – which is why this cannot be the end of the story. They would still be on the way to the goal, which is to be one as the Son is one with the Father. One way to express that goal would be to say: a oneness in which one is never without the other.

⁴ *An Anglican Methodist Covenant* (2003). www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/full-text-of-the-covenant/

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13. The goal to which both churches are committed under the Covenant is unity, but there are different ways of imagining what this might mean. Because the Church of England and the Methodist Church serve the same communities in England, it involves a different kind of relationship than that which exists between, for instance, Provinces of the Anglican Communion, or between the Church of England and Lutheran Churches on the Continent under the Porvoo Agreement⁵. It needs to be served by structures that enable the two churches to speak and act together, as they share together in God's mission in the same place. Because the Methodist Church also serves communities in Scotland, Wales, as well as the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Malta and Gibraltar, however, unity cannot mean that these two churches alone simply inhabit a single ecclesial structure.
14. The goal, therefore, needs to be one in which there is what might be called a 'reconciliation of structures' which serve the gift of communion, in particular structures of oversight and authority. As the *Common Statement* underpinning the Covenant stated at paragraphs 178–180, 'separate, parallel structures of oversight' are incompatible with full visible unity. This does not mean that there cannot be distinctive practices of oversight that reflect our different traditions and help to sustain our different ecclesial charisms (on which see paragraphs 27 and 32 below). The reconciliation of structures of oversight would, however, mean that discernment and decision-making were always done together, either through communication between office-holders and formal bodies, or through bodies serving Anglicans and Methodists together.
15. These parameters mean that some models of unity can be set aside; they may be appropriate in other contexts but cannot be envisaged as the goal for the Church of England and the Methodist Church. For instance, the goal cannot be that one church ultimately becomes part of the other church without any fundamental change to the church of which it becomes part. Nor can it be the creation of a new 'united' or 'uniting' church consisting only of the Church of England and the Methodist Church. On the other hand, because we are two churches that have such a strong geographical overlap in terms of the communities we serve, the unity we are seeking must include structures of consultation, oversight and authority and associated practices that enable joint decision-making, shared commitments and common action, so that our unity is truly visible in those communities.
16. While the term 'structures' may sound rather remote and bureaucratic, it is intended to refer to the various ways in which churches bring people together to confer and make decisions together about how the church responds to and participates in the mission of God: how it proclaims the gospel and how it teaches the faith, how it sets its priorities and how it uses its resources. Structures in this sense enable the exercise of oversight, in its personal, collegial and communal dimensions. One of the well-established challenges for Anglican-Methodist relations is that our structures of oversight do not match one another very neatly: Circuits are not the same as Parishes, or Area Deaneries; Districts are not like Dioceses; the roles of the Conference and the General Synod are distinct in a

⁵ Nonetheless, it does include the Lutheran Church of Great Britain and Diocese of Europe chaplaincies in Nordic and Baltic countries, both of which serve the same places as, respectively, Anglican and Lutheran churches.

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number of ways, despite the evident similarities. Could that lack of precise correspondence, however, be seen not so much as an obstacle as a positive expression of our different ecclesial 'charisms', with some distinct – not separate – structures valued as a significant way of preserving them?

17. Were the proposals of *MMiC* to be adopted, the commitment of both churches to sharing together in the historic episcopate would create new possibilities for developing structures to support practices of communication, consultation, deliberation and decision-making. It could be the catalyst for a deeper sharing in *episkope* ('oversight') that is expressed communally and collegially as well as personally in both our churches 'in various forms', as stated in Affirmation 7 of the 2003 Covenant.
18. The collegiality of bishops in the two churches, expressed publicly and visibly for instance at ordination services, could also be reflected in more formal and more informal contexts. Attention should be given to identifying opportunities for bishops to take counsel together – with others, as appropriate – for the good of the church; the principle of episcopal oversight is thereby affirmed 'as a visible sign and instrument of the communion of the Church in time and space'.
19. The aim of reconciliation of church structures at every level is to liberate church communities in villages, towns and cities to act together as one church in that place, in witness to the one gospel. Of course, structures by themselves cannot create unity: unity is given as the gift of Christ and received by his followers in their relationships with one another. As was said earlier, we are talking here about ways in which people in our churches come together to confer and make decisions together about how the church shares in the mission of God. There is a question, therefore, about how structures can develop in a way that enables people from both our churches to do this together. There is also a vital question about how such discussion and decision-making relate to the participation of local Christian communities in God's mission. We rejoice that in so many places, Anglicans and Methodists are engaged in missional work together, often alongside Christians from many other churches too. Structures of oversight in our two churches need to foster and encourage such cooperation for the sake of effectiveness in mission, not block it and complicate it by their separation from and lack of engagement with one another.
20. There is a balance to be struck here between the 'relational' and 'structural' dimensions of growing in communion. Both are needed, and neither can flourish in the long term without the other. There would also be a balance to be struck between the national and the 'local'. It has always been the intention that the proposals in *MMiC* should make new things possible in the relationship between our churches for those who wish to act on new opportunities, without imposing changes to current practice across the board. Inevitably, the take-up of those new opportunities will not proceed consistently throughout England, not least because existing levels of cooperation between our churches are not consistent. Development towards reconciliation of structures at national level is likely to depend in part on how far the need for it becomes apparent from the scale of cooperation and common commitment emerging at 'local' and 'regional' levels, and indeed to be shaped by response to that.

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21. It is evident that the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church need to be informed and consulted as conversation takes place about the goal of unity for Anglicans and Methodists in our context. The faith and order bodies have continued to be mindful of this and have taken steps to foster that conversation on an informal basis.
22. The faith and order bodies also recognise that while these questions are addressed at a number of points in *MMiC* (e.g. paragraphs 90–91 of the report, and the ‘Recommendations to be adopted at implementation’ at paragraph 95), there was no specific commitment to take steps towards a ‘reconciliation of structures’ that would overcome the current separation between them and enable our churches to act and speak together as they share in the mission of God. The proposals would be strengthened by making such a commitment, perhaps by including it as an integral part of the ‘formal declaration’ referred to as the ‘first step’ in *MMiC* paragraph 10. There might, for instance, be a case for specifically re-affirming Commitment 6 from the 2003 Covenant, or indeed to bring some fresh focus to it: ‘We commit ourselves to continue to develop structures of joint or shared communal, collegial and personal oversight, including shared consultation and decision-making, on the way to a fully united ministry of oversight.’

2. Reconciliation and the exchange of gifts

23. Chapter 1 of *MMiC* underlines the context for the proposals as reconciliation for mission. Our two churches have a history of estrangement and separation, while they also have a common mission-field. In England, they serve the same places and the same communities, and experience many of the same pressures and difficulties. Reconciliation therefore needs to be at the heart of what it means for our two churches to come into communion with one another, in a way that it did not in the case of, for instance, the Anglican churches of these islands with the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches under the Porvoo Agreement.
24. Part of the challenge of reconciliation between churches, as in other contexts, is to hold together two insights. First, through our estrangement, division and separation, there has been loss, and both churches have been diminished by that: through the embedding of an ‘oppositional’ identity (who we are is to be not like *them*), and the loss of the richness that all would have had through the sharing of gifts within the common life of one church. Second, in the time of separation, each church has not only preserved but also nurtured and developed distinctive gifts, particular ways of sharing as churches in the mission of God, and these could fall into neglect if we simply tried to turn back the clock, or if one church were to be absorbed without trace into the other, or even both into something new.
25. The approach of Receptive Ecumenism that has come to the fore in the past decade can be seen as a way of holding together these two insights. It requires us to begin by acknowledging and probing our difficulties, struggles and failures as a church, and only then turn to our partner churches in Christ and ask them to share with us the gifts they treasure with regard to the areas of challenge for us. The aim is a mutual journey of transformational learning in which we do not woodenly copy ‘successful’ solutions from another church in the hope they will

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solve our endemic problems, but rather ask how we might seek creatively to learn from the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in another church so that we might share more fully in those gifts in our own ecclesial context, for the good of all.

26. If the proposals of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* find support in our churches, one of the challenges might therefore be for each of them to discern what is the character of the loss that they have suffered through more than two centuries of separation from the other, and what may the particular gifts that they have been given in the providence of God to bring into the new relationship of ecclesial communion. The first part of the challenge touches on the question of ecclesial repentance: are there sins we need to confess before God today regarding our relations to one another, the agency for which may reside primarily with our forebears but to whose continuing malign effects we have nonetheless collectively contributed? How has the beauty of Christ's church been disfigured in the way that we have lived our separation from one another to this point? How might repentance for such sin be expressed through formal statements, in the liturgy and through practical action? Such questions are ultimately inseparable from issues about the goal of unity as discussed in the previous section. If we are not able to say what we have done wrong before God in our relations with one another, we will lack both theological imagination and spiritual commitment regarding significant change in those relations.
27. The second part of the challenge, the identification of gifts, may appear more straightforward. Yet the idea that Anglicans and Methodists respectively have ecclesial 'charisms' (or 'gifts') to share with each other requires careful unpacking in order to avoid unhelpful implications about relative superiorities. Unless it is accompanied by a commitment to ecclesial repentance for division and the work of discernment that is integral to it, there is a danger that we fail to distinguish where we are seeing Christ's gift to us and where our ecclesial life has been distorted by resistance to the other and the legitimation of separation. Ultimately, a gift given to any one part of the church of Christ is a gift for the sake of the whole, to be received by the whole: it cannot be a badge of separate identity, something that 'we' alone possess and 'you' cannot, unless you join us or become like us.
28. Whenever Christians of different traditions engage with one another in a way that respects and values the other as authentically embodying the apostolic faith and mission, such encounters have a transformational effect upon the participants. The envisaged process of receptive ecumenical learning is not about becoming less Methodist, or less Anglican – as lowest common denominator versions of ecumenism and ecumenical ecclesiology imply – but about becoming more deeply, more richly, more fully Methodist and Anglican, and thereby more fully and truly *catholic* in the credal sense of that term, through a process of imaginatively explored and critically discerned receptive learning.
29. That said, how might we begin to identify our respective ecclesial charisms, and what would it mean for Anglicans and Methodists to 'give' and 'receive' such charisms within a new relationship of ecclesial communion? In terms of what charisms might be identified as present in each church, Methodists might want to highlight:

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- an emphasis on the corporate nature of the Christian life (what John Wesley termed 'social holiness');
- the exercise of mutual oversight among all the people of God ('watching over one another in love');
- connexionalism, expressed through structures that bind local churches together under a central authority that is representative of the whole community;
- Christian 'conference' as a means of grace for authoritative discernment in matters that are essential to the faith and mission of the people of God.

30. Anglicans might choose to include among the ecclesial charisms present in the Church of England:

- appreciation both of the heritage of the pre-Reformation church of East and West, and of the insights of the Protestant Reformers;
- commitment to sharing the gospel and sustaining a Christian presence in every community in England through the parish system;
- maintaining the historic episcopate as a sign of continuity with the apostles in mission and teaching and of unity with the catholic church across space and time;
- the practice of the daily office, shared as widely as possible with the whole people of God.

31. These suggestions as to how our church's charisms might be described are offered only with the aim of providing a point of departure for much deeper reflection which, as was pointed out earlier, cannot be separated from the discernment of loss, failure and sin and the consequent path of repentance and healing.

32. The historical, theological and liturgical origins of British Methodism lie squarely in the Church of England; ecumenical dialogue has revealed the subsequent trajectories of the two churches to be compatible in many key respects, despite some obvious areas of divergence. The respective ecclesial charisms of the two churches should not therefore be entirely foreign to each other. The reconciliation of the two churches through a liturgical act to establish ecclesial communion can be thought of as initiating a continuing process whereby ecclesial charisms are increasingly shared so that communion is deepened and the wholeness of Christ's body more fully grasped by its members. What transformation may follow from that is not something that can be predicted in advance, though it should be clear that the 'reconciliation of structures' described in the previous section would benefit greatly from being connected to such a process of receptive ecumenism and mutual learning. For instance, could the Church of England and the Methodist Church commit themselves to an exercise analogous to the analysis of

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instruments of communion set out in the recent document from the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission, *Walking Together on the Way?*⁶

3. Episcopal ordination and eucharistic presidency

33. An amendment made by the General Synod to the original motion at the debate on *MMiC* in February 2018 asked the faith and order bodies ‘to explore and elucidate further the relationship between episcopal ordination and eucharistic presidency.’ Its wording reflected a significant difference of opinion that had already become evident within the Church of England regarding the report’s proposals for interchangeability of presbyteral ministries, by which all current presbyters / priests serving in one church would become eligible to serve in the other. A substantial number of Anglicans regard the historic commitment of the Church of England that all who preside at the eucharist should be ordained as priests by bishops in the historic episcopate as, on the face of things, simply incompatible with this core element of the *MMiC* proposals.
34. The commitment by Anglicanism to upholding the inseparability of episcopal ordination and eucharistic presidency would be understood in different ways by members of the Church of England. For some, it is a ‘denominational’ feature of Anglicanism, for others a ‘universal’ aspect of catholic order that Anglican tradition maintains. It remains, however, a commitment across the Anglican Communion worldwide, and indeed it serves to express the inseparability of ‘local’ and ‘universal’ church for Anglicans: ordination of the eucharistic president by a bishop in the historic episcopate, which is a gift of God to the universal church for the sake of its unity, reflects a concern that the local celebration of the eucharist should always also be a celebration of the universal church and recognized with confidence as such.
35. While this Anglican commitment remains undisputed, the question is whether it is a rule that permits of no conceivable exceptions. Chapter 3 of *MMiC* argued that an exception could be made on a temporary basis in the case of current Methodist presbyters in light of the combination of a number of factors, including: (a) the Methodist Church would be receiving the historic episcopate and itself permanently adopting the norm of episcopal ordination for all ordained ministers; (b) there would be a new relationship of communion, including episcopal communion, between the Church of England and the Methodist Church; and (c) the Covenant affirmations regarding church and ministry provide a secure basis for this further step along the road to unity. While the exception would constitute a temporary ‘anomaly’ in terms of the Anglican understanding of catholic order, it could nonetheless be gladly borne on this basis for the sake of enabling another church to share more fully in that order and thereby making the unity of the church also more fully visible. This approach is consistent with that of the Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Unity Faith and Order, as set out in its report on ‘Receiving One Another’s Ordained Ministries’, which was commended by the

⁶ Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to Be the Church – Local, Regional, Universal. An Agreed Statement of the Third Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III)* (London: SPCK, 2018).

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Anglican Consultative Council in 2016.⁷ It became clear in the initial reception of *MMiC*, however, that not all were persuaded by these arguments.

36. It might be argued that part of the difficulty for the Church of England is the way that Anglican ecumenism, as reflected in the 2003 Covenant, has sought to separate mutual recognition as churches in ecumenical dialogue from mutual receiving of one another's ordained ministries. The former was affirmed under the Covenant and the latter was postponed. Yet how can one recognise a church without recognising its ministers as duly ordained and as effective in their ministry? And if one church recognises another's ministers as duly ordained and as effective in their ministry, why would it not receive them as ordained ministers? On the other hand, if Anglicans cannot receive the ordained ministers of another church because of the absence of episcopal ordination, are they not also thereby implying that this church itself lacks something because of the absence of such episcopal ministry – and would it not be clearer and ultimately more truthful to say so to their ecumenical partners?
37. The faith and order bodies have given serious consideration to the question of how far it might be possible to meet these concerns on the part of some Anglicans without undermining the fundamental parameters for the approach set out in *MMiC*. To require an episcopal ordination for current Methodist presbyters who wished to be eligible to serve in the Church of England would clearly have that effect. It would also be in tension with the recognition of the Methodist Church's ordained ministries expressed in affirmation (5) of the Covenant, given the agreement of both our churches that a person cannot be ordained twice to the same order, as ministers are ordained in the Church of God, not in a specific denomination.
38. Moreover, any approach that created two 'classes' of Methodist presbyters so far as the Church of England is concerned, one eligible to serve in the Church of England and one not, would be unacceptable to the Methodist Church, which has a strong understanding and practice of the unity of the presbyterate in the life of the church. This would apply, for instance, to a limitation in each church of eligibility to serve as ordained ministers in the other church only to those ordained after the implementation of the proposals in *MMiC*.
39. Does this issue therefore present an immovable obstacle for our churches on the path to unity? Even if a way forward can be found that carries a majority of people in the Church of England, would it not inevitably leave behind a significant number of Anglicans?
40. One response would be to seek to shape an approach towards enabling 'a fresh creative act of reconciliation which acknowledges the manifold yet unified activity of the Holy Spirit throughout the ages' (cited in *MMiC* §54). Such an act would:

⁷ Inter-Anglican Standing Committee on Unity, Faith & Order, 'Receiving One Another's Ordained Ministries', in *Towards a Symphony of Instruments: A Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion*, Unity, Faith & Order Paper No. 1 (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 2015), pp. 1–23.

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- focus on ordained ministers, without isolating them from the body of the church;
- have appropriate mutuality for the two churches;
- call on God for something new to be given to the churches;
- enable both to speak with plain intent, not in deliberately ambiguous code.

41. This could be framed in terms of what was said in the previous section about reconciliation and the exchange of gifts. Were the Church of England to present as one of its ecclesial charisms commitment to the historic episcopate as a sign of continuity in apostolic faith and witness, the Methodist Church could commit itself to receiving that sign 'transposed' into the register of its own ecclesial life as a gift of Christ to the whole church (not an offering from the Church of England). To say that much is only to re-state the heart of *MMiC* in somewhat different language. The further question would then be: for that sign to be effective in the life of the Methodist Church, what might appropriately happen that would associate the church as a body, including its ordained ministers, with the act of receiving the historic episcopate, in the person of the newly ordained President-bishop, as a sign of apostolicity? At the same time, the Church of England should be asking how it might be changed by a deeper appreciation of the ecclesial charisms of the Methodist Church.

42. Another possibility, which the joint subgroup commissioned by the faith and order bodies considered in some depth, would be to incorporate into the service described in paragraph 93 of *MMiC* as inaugurating the new relationship between the churches formal public acknowledgement that they have been diminished by the separation between them, with prayer for the fullness of God's grace to be received as they now become churches reconciled in communion. The same paragraph notes that 'Recognition of the changed relationship of presbyters / priests from one church towards the other church should be included within the liturgy'; what might prayer for the fullness of God's grace might look like in that specific context?

43. Although the joint subgroup decided after careful reflection that it would not be helpful to follow the precedent, it did consider one answer to this question from Anglican ecumenism in the post-war decades: a 'Service of Reconciliation' involving mutual laying-on of hands. Such a service was an integral part of the scheme for Anglican-Methodist unity under discussion in our churches in the 1960s and early 1970s, until the decisive vote against it in the General Synod in 1972. The main outline of the 1968 scheme was sketched out in a report published ten years earlier, in 1958. The final chapter made the case for a Service of Reconciliation as key for achieving what was termed the 'unification of ministries'.⁸

⁸ *Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church: An Interim Statement* (London: SPCK, 1958).

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44. Five years later, an interim report included a draft text for the Service (as it came to be called).⁹ The controversial reception of the Service, which included the mutual laying on of hands, is already apparent in the 'Dissentient View' of some original members of the group that produced the report included as an appendix, which attacked it as a covert form of episcopal ordination for Methodists to satisfy Anglican scruples. A further report published in 1967 acknowledged the criticism that the 1963 draft Service had attracted and proposed a revised text for the Service.¹⁰ It also addressed the question of whether or not the Service constitutes ordination for Methodist ministers so far as Anglicans are concerned by asserting that the Service was intentionally ambiguous: those who wished to could understand it as episcopal ordination, but no one needed to do so. In effect, its meaning was open for participants and observers to decide.
45. The final report of the appointed group, in 1968, devoted a whole chapter to a further issue that had arisen: what about those ministers who did not attend? Accepting that some, on principle, would not, it acknowledged that 'This will mean that the relationship created by the Service will fall somewhat short of full communion in practice.' Yet in order to protect those who make that decision from any discrimination, it also urged that 'official lists of ministers published by, or for, the two Churches' should not record information about participation in the Service.¹¹
46. In the Church of England, opposition to the scheme had brought together some from the Evangelical and some from the Catholic wing who were accustomed to keeping their distance from one another. In 1970, a pair from each of these constituencies published *Growing into Union*, which included an extended attack on the Service in an Appendix with the memorable title of 'A Bog of Illogic'.¹² For the authors, the central 'illogic' underlying the Service was its refusal to say whether or not Methodist presbyters are presbyters. If they are not, then ordination is clearly necessary. If they are, then ordination is clearly wrong.
47. *Growing into Union* also pointed out a potential further level of ambiguity regarding the Service within the Church of England: would Methodists who participated in it be regarded as episcopally ordained as understood within the Church of England's ecclesiastical law (e.g. Canon C 1)? Right up to the final vote in 1972 when the proposals were defeated in the General Synod, a degree of unclarity persisted with regard to this question. The difficulty in giving an unambiguous answer is unlikely to have assisted confidence in the scheme.
48. Despite these evident difficulties, services of reconciliation involving the mutual laying on of hands have continued to feature in some ecumenical initiatives involving churches of the Anglican Communion. For instance, the 'Celebration of

⁹ *Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church: A Report to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Conference of the Methodist Church* (London: Church Information Office, 1963).

¹⁰ Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, *Towards Reconciliation: The Interim Statement of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission* (London: SPCK and Epworth Press, 1967).

¹¹ Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, *Report of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, Part 2: The Scheme* (London: SPCK and Epworth Press, 1968), pp. 55–57.

¹² C. O. Buchanan, E. L. Mascall, J. I. Packer and the Bishop of Willesden, *Growing into Union: Proposals for Forming a United Church in England* (London; SPCK, 1970).

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Full Communion between the Episcopal Church and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church' (held on 11 February 2011) included 'a ceremony of mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministries, represented by the mutual recognition and blessing of each other's Episcopal ministries', with a carefully-worded prayer that the bishops of each church said regarding the bishops of the other.

49. Nonetheless, it is hard to see how such a service in the case of the Church of England and the Methodist Church could avoid encountering the same serious difficulties that beset its predecessor. For those for whom episcopal ordination of clergy who preside at the eucharist in the Church of England is essential, this is not in truth a matter of 'recognition' or even reconciliation (with whom do Methodist presbyters need to be reconciled?), but of something being missing that needs to be supplied for the sake of the fullness of the church (not simply as some kind of 'condition' imposed by intransigent Anglicans). The heart of the challenge here is, first, how that concern is heard by the Methodist Church, and, second, whether a response can be imagined that is not another, now episcopal, ordination, but rather a properly episcopal action that calls down the Holy Spirit on those who *are* ordained and recognised as such, and contains a proper dimension of mutuality that does not single out one church as 'full' and the other as 'lacking'.
50. Such an episcopal action could have an appropriate place within an inaugural service or services for the new relationship between the churches.¹³ While there should be space for the liturgical expression of reconciliation between the churches, drawing on the approach set out in the previous section, there should also be a strong emphasis on commissioning for common mission, and this would seem a more fitting context for prayer by the bishops of both churches for the ordained clergy of both churches, to receive the gifts of grace needed to serve faithfully in both churches so that they may be truly united in worship and witness in England.¹⁴ The focus would be on seeking fresh anointing from the Holy Spirit for the new situation that is just beginning and the new opportunities that will come with it for sharing in mission. The extension of hands by the bishops in prayer for the assembled clergy would be a suitable gesture. It would not be unreasonable to expect that clergy who wish to serve in both churches in the future should make participation in such a service a matter of the very highest priority.

¹³ There would be various possibilities here, e.g. one 'central' service only, two services in the two Provinces of the Church of England, a number of regional services, or a central service that could then be replicated regionally.

¹⁴ Cf. the reference to a 'Service of Commission' in the 'South India Proposals for Church Union (1919)' in G. K. A. Bell, ed., *Documents Bearing on the Problem of Christian Unity and Fellowship 1916-1920* (London: SPCK, 1920), p. 27, and the statement from the bishops of the Anglican Communion in the 1920 Lambeth Appeal to All Christian People that 'if the authorities of other Communions should so desire, we are persuaded that, terms of union having been otherwise satisfactorily adjusted, bishops and clergy of our Communion would willingly accept from these authorities a form of commission or recognition which would commend our ministry to their congregations, as having its place in the one family life.' The Appeal appears as Resolution 9 from the 1920 Lambeth Conference; the Resolutions are available on the Anglican Communion website, at <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127731/1920.pdf>.

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51. *MMiC* also suggested that there might be a place for a liturgy relating to individual ministers when they begin to exercise an ordained ministry in the other church from the one in which they were ordained (paragraph 94). Suitable services of welcome for those entering new ministries could be shaped according to the local context, with appropriate forms of prayer and liturgical action that express participation in the one apostolic ministry of word and sacrament in the mission of the church in the local environment. The commissioning of clergy for common mission in the inaugural service could provide a possible continuing liturgical resource for use on these occasions in both churches.

4. Beginning a new chapter

52. As noted above, *MMiC* spoke briefly of the need for ‘a service to inaugurate the new relationship of communion between our churches’. The service or services would take place following the reception of the gift of the historic episcopate by the Methodist Church in the context of the Methodist Conference with the ordination of President as bishop and a formal declaration of communion between the churches being made by the Conference and the General Synod.
53. Given our history, it would be important that such a service or services enables the liturgical expression of reconciliation. In line with section 2 above, that would include space for the appropriate acknowledgement of penitence for past sins, the healing of memories and injuries, commitment to seek the things that make for peace and affirmation by each church of the value of the distinctive ‘charisms’ that have been nurtured by the other in the time of separation.
54. As was suggested in the previous section, there should also be a clear focus on commissioning for shared mission. It is our shared missional context that both impels us to seek greater unity and that shapes the way we respond to that call. The commissioning of ordained ministers in this situation should be clearly located within a commissioning of the whole people of God for mission together. While this might be located at various points in the service, it should certainly be picked up in the blessing and dismissal. The church grows deeper into communion in Christ as it looks out to the world for which Christ died, not by turning in upon itself.
55. The liturgical commissioning and dismissal with the accent on common mission needs to be followed up by practical action if it is to shape from the outset the new stage of the Covenant relationship. The faith and order bodies therefore also wish to propose that soon after the inaugural service or services have happened, there should be a high-profile ‘Council event’ to mark that new stage and to set it in the context of shared mission and service to the world. Representatives would include lay and ordained members of both churches who might work on drafting a key statement for the new relationship that focused on the churches’ mission in England – a statement to guide and inspire, as well as potentially making specific recommendations for the future shape of that relationship.
56. A further stage would be to establish an authoritative standing body, one of whose tasks would be to outline steps towards the reconciliation of structures, as

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described in section 1 above. Ultimately such a body would consider matters including deployment, money, buildings, governance, and territorial questions of dioceses and districts. This is a slow process of deepening, mutual embrace, always committed to discerning reconciled structures which support, strengthen and reveal the communion we share. It would be important to highlight that this is precisely not intended as a takeover of one church by the other – indeed, distinctiveness in e.g. liturgy and spirituality should be rejoiced in – but rather the emergence of renewed structures which reveal the dynamics of a renewed life of ecclesial faithfulness in mission and service. Mutual commitment to such a process would need to be celebrated publicly from the moment the churches entered into full communion.

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B. ORDERS OF MINISTRY AND SHARING IN MISSION

1. The President-Bishop in the Methodist Church

57. The Methodist Church maintains a strong sense of continuity in apostolic faith, worship and mission through the corporate oversight (*episkope*) of the Conference. As a sign of Methodism's continuity with the Church universal and for the sake of greater visible unity, it has expressed a readiness to accept *episkope* in the form of bishops (provided that bishops, like everyone else, were constitutionally subject to the authority of the Conference in the exercise of their ministry): 'if in practice episcopacy serves to reinforce the unity and *koinonia* of the whole Church, it is to be welcomed.'¹⁵
58. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* contains proposals for the Methodist Church to receive the sign of the historic episcopate and establish the office of President-Bishop. If the proposals were to be adopted, then it would mean a permanent change in the Methodist Church's doctrine of ministry to include bishops as well as presbyters and deacons as ordained ministers. Of particular significance is the fact that the reception of the historic episcopate will involve changes to clause 4 of the *Deed of Union* (the doctrinal standards clause) which has its own defined process for adoption. The suggested amendments would include the following description of a bishop:
- "The office of bishop which the Methodist Church has received from the wider church is a witness to the continuity of the Church of God from earliest times, a sign of its intention to be faithful to the apostles' teaching and mission, and an instrument of its communion. Under the authority of the Conference bishops exercise a ministry of oversight and preside at ordinations."
59. In common with other churches, in the ordination of bishops, the Methodist Church would intend to ordain to the episcopate in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Ordination would be by prayer and the laying on of hands by bishops standing in the historic episcopate and would take place within the context of Holy Communion. The service would need to be located in the Conference, as an expression of the way in which the exercise of the authority of the President-Bishop is constitutionally subject to the Conference. It might take place in a church near to the place where the Conference is being held but would remain an act of the Conference, and would only take place following the decision of the Conference (in parallel with the ordination services for presbyters and deacons).
60. Much work has already been done by the Joint Implementation Commission in exploring the proposal for a President-Bishop¹⁶ and this forms the foundations for the proposals, but questions raised in both churches warrant further exploration.
61. Three specific questions have been asked by Bishops in the Church of England and other Anglicans:

¹⁵ *Called to Love and Praise* (1999), 4.6.9

¹⁶ Including *Moving Forward in Covenant* (paras 38-52) and *Embracing the Covenant* (Chp 5)

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- a) For whom will a President-Bishop be bishop while serving as President?
- b) For whom will past President-Bishops continue to exercise an episcopal ministry, which is recognised as such within the Methodist Church?
- c) What kind of collegiality can be imagined between, on the one hand, President-Bishops and past President-Bishops of the Methodist Conference and, on the other, the College and House of Bishops of the Church of England?

62. The 2018 Methodist Conference sought clarification of particular aspects of the role of a President-Bishop:

How would the episcopal orders of Presidents and past-Presidents of Conference be expressed in ministry and recognised by others within the Methodist Church? How will the ministry of a President-Bishop relate to the ministry of the Vice-President? Some further reflection, particularly on the continuing episcopal ministry of past-Presidents, would be welcome.¹⁷

63. Connexionalism and collaborative working are essential and defining characteristics of the Methodist Church in Britain. This means that it is not possible to fully understand the role of the President of the Conference or of a President-Bishop in isolation from others in leadership roles including officers of the Conference and members of the Connexional Leaders Forum (including Chairs of District). The relationship of the President to the Vice-President, to past Presidents and Vice-Presidents, and the relationship of both the President and Vice-President to the Secretary of the Conference are significant. An understanding of the relationships between current and past Presidents and Vice-Presidents is particularly important for considering the proposals for a President-Bishop. Drawing from the established practice and the current Standing Orders of the Methodist Church, these relationships will be described before moving to consideration of the specific questions about the role of a President-Bishop asked by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference.

The Relationship of the President and Vice-President of the Conference

64. The President and the Vice-President of the Conference exercise collaborative leadership. This is clearly articulated in the order for their induction when the Ex-President says:

A and B the Conference has elected you to the offices of President and Vice-President. In its sessions you are to preside over its worship, its conferring and its taking of decisions. You will be its representatives, embodying its authority and acting on its behalf as authorised by the Deed of Union and Standing Orders. You are called to share with others in the oversight and leadership of the Church. You are called to a ministry of visitation in the Districts and Circuits and with partners across the world, to encourage the Methodist people in their calling and strengthen the bonds that connect them with each other. In all this you are to

¹⁷ *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, 2018 Methodist Conference, Part A, 6.4, *Conference Agenda*, p.432

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exercise, in collaboration, the particular gifts God has given you as a presbyter and a lay person in the Church.

65. In this collaborative ministry there are shared responsibilities and an emphasis on consultation and mutual support. In most cases responsibility can be carried by either the President or the Vice-President but there are rights, duties and responsibilities that are exclusive to the role of President. The responsibilities exclusive to the role of President are those where it is necessary for the person to be a presbyter. For example, it is only the President who can preside at the Presbyteral session of the Conference or station presbyters and deacons between sessions of the Conference. It should also be noted that, in instances where the President is to act in consultation with the Vice-President, “in the event of a disagreement the decision of the President shall prevail.”¹⁸
66. A President-Bishop would exercise a collaborative ministry and responsibilities would be shared with the Vice-President. Such collaboration and partnership models the collaborative ministry of lay and ordained in every part of the Methodist Church and enables each to use their gifts to best effect in leadership of the church. It would remain true that there would be responsibilities exclusive to the President-Bishop as a minister ordained to the presbyterate and episcopate.

For whom will a President-Bishop be bishop while serving as President?

67. The President-Bishop would be bishop for the Connexion, which is the unit of episcopal oversight governed by the Conference (i.e. in this sense equivalent to a diocese). The President acts in the life of the Connexion sometimes by right or duty and sometimes by invitation. For example, it is the duty of the President to oversee Presidential Inquiries into the life of circuits (see paragraph 73 below) and it is the right and duty of the President to chair and preside at the presbyteral session of the Conference. The President is a member of the Methodist Council and the Connexional Leaders’ Forum by right. On the other hand, the President visits the Districts and Circuits and preaches or presides in acts of worship around the Connexion normally by invitation.
68. The President-Bishop would continue to act in the life of the Connexion as the President now does, that is as the representative embodiment of the authority of the Conference. In the following paragraphs (69-76) some of the ways in which this representative role is currently seen in the life of the Connexion and beyond are identified.
69. When the Conference is meeting the President presides at the eucharist in both the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions and shares with the Vice-President in presiding over the business in the Representative Session. The President and former Presidents preside at the ordination services and ordain presbyters and deacons. Should the Methodist Church in Britain receive the historic episcopate as proposed in *MMiC* only those past-Presidents who have been ordained bishop will continue to ordain. All other functions of past-Presidents (as detailed in

¹⁸ Standing Order 110 (7) (ii)

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paragraphs 77–83 below) will be shared between past-Presidents and past-President bishops.

70. Between the sessions of the Conference the President presides and preaches at liturgical functions in the Connexion. One example of this would be that the President presided and preached at the connexional celebration of the 40th anniversary of the first ordination of women as presbyters in the Methodist Church in Britain.
71. The President is a focus for mission and unity through the exercise of a ministry of visitation. The President has power to assist at any Synod by invitation (a power granted by the Conference after the death of Wesley in order “to render our districts more effective”). This is clearly a missional imperative.
72. In exercising a ministry of visitation to the Connexion the President fulfils a pastoral role and a missional role, preaching, presiding and encouraging within the Circuits.
73. The President, if requested, has the right to visit any Circuit to inquire into its affairs and to take any steps permitted which he or she judges to be beneficial. Presidential Inquiries are serious undertakings with wide powers. A Presidential Inquiry may be requested by a Circuit or District or as the result of a discipline or legal process. This is an important missional and oversight provision.
74. The President has an ambassadorial role throughout the Church, in Great Britain and beyond, to the Methodist Church, to other Churches and in the public square.
75. Any legal proceedings brought by or against the Methodist Church are in the name of the President of the Conference.
76. The President holds particular responsibilities in relation to presbyters and deacons:
 - a) The President ordains those recommended for ordination by the Conference.
 - b) Between sessions of the Conference, the President on behalf of the Conference, has the power to station ministers (to determine in which setting they exercise their ministry) and may make any changes necessary.
 - c) Those who are ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament in other conferences or Christian churches and wish to be admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference apply in writing to the President who ensures that appropriate procedures take place in order to bring a recommendation to the Conference.
 - d) Between Sessions of the Conference the President gives permission for ministers to become supernumerary (to retire).
 - e) Any minister wishing to resign from Full Connexion has to inform the President who decides whether to give permission on behalf of the Conference and will make any declaration as to continuing status as a local preacher or a member.
 - f) A former presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion who wishes to be re-instated must apply in writing to the President who ensures that the appropriate procedures take place in order that a recommendation may be brought to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference, which is always chaired by the President.

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g) As a function of the pastoral role for the Connexion, the President has to be informed of the breakdown of the marriage of any minister.

For whom will past-President bishops continue to exercise an episcopal ministry, which is recognised as such within the Methodist Church?

77. Past-President bishops would continue to be bishops for the Connexion, the unit of episcopal oversight governed by the Conference. In the year following presidential office a bishop would have particular responsibilities as ex-President. The Presidency, which meets regularly together with the Secretary of the Conference for mutual support and encouragement consists of the current President and Vice-President, the President and Vice-President from the previous year and the President and Vice-President designate.
78. Past-President bishops would be stationed into a particular context and in that context would exercise the appropriate ministry. For example, a past-President bishop who was stationed as a Superintendent Minister would carry the responsibilities of a Superintendent Minister. This would not prevent them exercising an episcopal ministry for the Connexion.
79. In the context of the Connexion, past-President bishops could be invited to ordain. Those former Presidents who were not ordained to the episcopal office would no longer be invited or permitted to ordain.
80. There have been questions about the nature of any continuing relationship between a President and those they have ordained. Because those ordained are ordained by the decision of the Conference, their continuing relationship is with the Conference, its President (therefore President-bishop as would be under these proposals), and its appointed officers. Any personal or pastoral relationship with the ordaining minister is incidental. The fidelity and character of ordained ministers is overseen by the Warden of the Diaconal Order in the case of deacons and the Chairs of the Districts in the case of presbyters. In a similar way, the key relationship for a deacon or priest in the Church of England is with the bishop whose licence the deacon or priest currently holds; whether that is the same bishop who ordained the deacon or priest is incidental.
81. There are a number of connexional committees which have to be chaired by a past President or Vice-President of the Conference and this would continue to be a way in which past-President bishops exercise an episcopal ministry. Examples of this are:
- a) The Conference Business Committee
 - b) The Methodist Council
 - c) It is the duty of the President or a past-President designated by the President to preside at a District Policy Committee when a casual vacancy for a Chair of District is being filled, and act as Chair of District until that vacancy is filled. (DU 42 (c))
 - d) At an appeal hearing in the Presbyteral Session of the Conference where the President is unable to preside, a past President must preside.

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82. Past Presidents are often invited to preach, to speak, to lead retreats and to use their own particular gifts around the Connexion where they are received as representatives of the wider Connexion.
83. If the recommendations of *MMiC* are implemented, they would result in a situation where a number of past-President bishops would exercise some form of episcopal ministry within a unit (the Connexion) in which one current President-bishop has responsibility for episcopal oversight. This would be in many ways parallel the situation in the great majority of Church of England dioceses, where one or more suffragan bishops exercise episcopal ministry in a unit where the diocesan bishop has overall responsibility for episcopal oversight. It is possible that these parallel situations might provide an opportunity for Anglicans and Methodists to learn from one another about the nature and practice of episcopal ministry in its varied forms.

What kind of collegiality can be imagined between President-Bishops and past-President bishops of the Methodist Church and the College and House of Bishops of the Church of England?

84. To ordain a person into the historic episcopate is a significant act that changes the relationship not only between churches that are so ordered, but between the person so ordained and others so ordained in the church universal. We recognise that this needs some incarnate expression both in order to sustain that person in their episcopal identity and representative responsibility, and in order to provide actual relationships in which a shared vision of growing together might emerge in response to God's Spirit.
85. It is possible to imagine that once there is a significant number of bishops ordained in the historic episcopate in the Methodist Church there might be an appropriate forum for them to meet together, and also to meet with others in episcopal orders. In particular, there could be a case for them meeting together with members of the Church of England's College of Bishops. That body – which comprises all bishops in active ministry in the Church of England – is a gathering for prayer, reflection and fellowship; it has no governance function. Were those ordained as bishops in the Methodist Church to join with members of the Church of England College of Bishops, that would constitute a new episcopal college comprising bishops from both churches. This could become a significant context not just for fellowship, support and mutual learning, but also for imagining together how episcopal ministry in both churches might be transformed through new ecclesial relations for the sake of unity in mission.
86. In considering the forums in which bishops of the Church of England and the Methodist Church might meet there are a number of significant points to be taken into account:
- a) the existing collegiality amongst past Presidents and past Vice-Presidents which is important, for mutual support, for shared wisdom and for reflection with other leaders on the life of the Methodist Church in Britain. Methodists would not want to see a division in the body of past Presidents and Vice-Presidents as there is an important principle of collaboration and consultation between Presidents and Vice-Presidents (who are normally lay people and never

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presbyters) in relation to those functions that belong to both (particularly in relation to the Presidency).

b) the governance and discipline of the Methodist Church and the management and administration of its affairs is vested in the Conference.¹⁹ This means that the Conference (chiefly in its representative session) will continue to determine policy and to exercise the powers, authorities, rights and duties necessary including those relating to doctrine, confirming stations, determining practice and deciding whom to ordain. This means that the role within the Methodist Church of those ordained bishop will be very different from the role exercised within the Church of England by the House of Bishops. It might however be possible for Methodist bishops to be invited as observers to the House of Bishops.

87. It may be that with the changed relationship between our two churches with the intention of growing together in unity, some bodies of the Methodist Church might meet together with appropriate Church of England bodies, though the precise make-up of these would need careful consideration.

¹⁹ Deed of Union clause 18

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2. The interchangeability of deacons

88. The final report of the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC), *The Challenge of the Covenant*, recommended work on the interchangeability of diaconal as well as presbyteral ministries.²⁰ It was noted in *MMiC* that the 'view of the faith and order bodies is that any proposals regarding diaconal ministries must await continuing dialogue among all the churches concerning the nature of diaconal ministry'²¹, and that 'a common understanding of the diaconate is not an essential requirement for the churches to enter into communion.'²² The 2018 Methodist Conference emphasised the importance of continuing work on the interchangeability of deacons and asked for progress on this work to be included in any further reports.

89. The work on the Anglican-Methodist Covenant acknowledged that there are significant differences between Methodist and Church of England deacons:

'In the Church of England, the diaconate is one of the three orders of ministry. Anglican deacons are ordained to a ministry of word, sacrament (though not Eucharistic presidency) and pastoral care. Most but not all deacons go on to be ordained to the presbyterate after about a year. No-one can be ordained priest who has not previously been ordained deacon. The Methodist Church, on the other hand, has a distinctive, permanent diaconate which is at the same time both an order of ministry and a religious order with a rule of life. Methodist deacons are seen as a focus for the servant ministry of Christ and the Church. In the Methodist Church this is the intention in the ordination of deacons. They are not ordained to a ministry of word and sacrament. Candidates for the presbyterate do not undergo ordination to the diaconate first ...'²³

90. It is worth noting that there have been a number of initiatives aimed at a recovery of the distinctive diaconate within the Church of England. Some dioceses have made this a particular focus in their approach to ministry. One of those is the Diocese of York, which at present has around 30 distinctive deacons. The type of ministry they exercise would vary, although it would be likely to include, as in the passage just quoted, dimensions of word, sacrament and pastoral care.

91. The Methodist Church currently has two orders of ministry, the presbyterate and the diaconate. Both orders express the vocation of the ordained, but are distinct in that the diaconal order of ordained ministry is also a dispersed religious order with distinct structures of oversight. Deacons in the Methodist Church have to demonstrate a call to both the order of ministry and to the religious order. Membership of the religious order and the Office of Deacon are both life-long. Members of the religious order adhere to the Rule of Life and its pattern of daily

²⁰ JIC, 2014, *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness (Report to the Methodist Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England)*. Methodist Conference 2014 Agenda 21, pp.125-245; General Synod (GS) 1971, recommendation 1, para 46.

²¹ *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, paragraph 15

²² AMICUM, 2014, *Into All the World*, p52.

²³ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Common Statement of the Formal Conversations between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England*, 2001, para 146.

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prayer, abide by the discipline of direct stationing, attend the annual Convocation and meet in Area Groups.

92. Ordained Methodist ministers are also in Full Connexion with the Conference. At present, however, it is not possible for someone to change from one order of ministry to the other without first ceasing to be in Full Connexion. For example, a deacon cannot remain in Full Connexion as a deacon if they are subsequently accepted as a candidate for presbyteral ministry.
93. There are also differences in how Methodist and Church of England deacons fulfil a liturgical role. For example, currently, Methodist deacons do not preach by virtue of their ordination but by being trained and admitted as Local Preachers (a lay office). Only deacons who are also Local Preachers therefore have responsibility of acts of worship on the Methodist preaching plan.
94. The Methodist Church is undertaking a significant review of its theology and ecclesiology underpinning the diaconate, which is due to be reported to the 2019 Conference. The report will also consider whether the religious order should be opened to receive into membership Methodists who are lay or ordained to presbyteral ministry, and consider whether those whom it ordains to the diaconal order of ministry continue to be required also to become members of the religious order. It will further include exploration of the liturgical role of deacons and how deacons fulfil their ministry of Word. Until this work is complete it is difficult to establish the level of convergence in understanding of ordained diaconal ministry.
95. In 2016 an interim report to the Methodist Conference on the theology and ecclesiology underpinning the diaconate underlined the reflections in the *Jerusalem Report* which recognised that *diakonia* is profoundly contextual²⁴ and that the form of the diaconate or diaconal ministry would be specific to the particular context of the church. Thus 'unity expressed through *diakonia* will emerge through the development of the form of ministry needed to respond to particular needs, rather than in any attempt to come to a uniform understanding of the diaconate.'²⁵ Further reflection on this will form part of the continuing work on the interchangeability of deacons, particularly in considering where there is difference in the form of ordained diaconal ministry which it might be important to uphold for the sake of God's mission in the world.

²⁴ *The Jerusalem Report*, 2012, p.36

²⁵ *The Jerusalem Report*, 2012, p.37; *The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate interim report*, 2016, 2.5.4.

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3. Welcoming one another's presbyters / priests

96. A relationship of communion between the Church of England and the Methodist Church might be expected to open new possibilities for mission and ministry through the interchangeability of ministry. 'Interchangeability of ministry' is a shorthand phrase used by ecumenists to indicate a situation where two churches, retaining their distinct structures and identities, agree that each church will welcome ordained ministers from the other church as also eligible to serve within its own life. It is both the fruit and visible sign of the communion between those churches and a means for deepening that communion, including their practical partnership in mission and ministry (*MMiC* §§10–12). It therefore involves relationships between the relevant parts of the churches.
97. The second of the two proposed new commitments for our two churches in *MMiC* is 'to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches' (*MMiC* §11). Such a commitment creates new opportunities for participating in God's mission through sharing gifts and resources and together witnessing in the world. In Circuit and Parishes and in wider contexts, where Anglicans and Methodists are already working together or contemplating closer relationships, then the interchangeability of ministry may enable new ways of relating, working and worshipping together. Welcoming one another's priests and presbyters by invitation is permissive, opening up the potential for new things to happen where there is the desire for this, but it does not create either the right or obligation for anyone to serve in the other church; it should always be a matter of shared discernment.
98. In both churches the welcoming of a presbyter/priest into any appointment already involves a task of discernment, through stationing in the Methodist Church and through the more varied processes in the Church of England. If all presbyters/priests serving in either church are recognised as eligible to serve in both churches, it is important to remember that eligibility is a necessary but not sufficient condition for suitability to serve in a ministerial post. Considering a request for an ordained minister from one church to serve in another church with which that church is in communion will always call for appropriate processes of scrutiny, consultation and approval. It may result in recommendations regarding formation, practical training for specific tasks, the manner of inauguration of new ministries, relationships between the congregations involved and on-going supervision and development. There will be a need for clear documentation that is recorded by both churches and kept up to date in both.
99. The rest of this chapter sets out five scenarios to illustrate ways in which we might welcome one another's presbyters/priests and thus open up new possibilities for mission and ministry. A scenario is presented and then a comment is made on: what is currently possible; what might become possible through interchangeability of ministry; and key issues arising from the discussion. The faith and order bodies have undertaken further reflection on the issues identified and these are picked up in the final section of this document, where some recommendations are made.

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100. The scenarios below imagine responses to situations where a minister who retains their primary affiliation to the church in which they were ordained is enabled to serve in the other church as well. In each case, this freedom to serve is used to resource the church of God for participation in the mission of God.

Scenario 1: Assisting in ministry

101. The village of Little Compton has one, Anglican, church. The vicar lives in Little Compton but also has responsibility for three other churches which take up most of the time. There is no longer a Methodist church in the village, although the village is part of a circuit and a Methodist minister lives in a nearby village within the same Church of England benefice. There is, however, a very active supernumerary (retired) Methodist presbyter who lives next door to the parish church in Little Compton. With the support of the Methodist church in the neighbouring village, the church in Little Compton has set up a midweek Bible study, Holy Communion and coffee morning (with a crèche) attended by 15–20 people each week. The retired Methodist minister has taken the lead in this. The retired minister has received requests to conduct baptisms and a wedding.

What is currently possible

102. The supernumerary Methodist presbyter can take turns with the Vicar in presiding at the mid-week Holy Communion through the interpretation that the service she is taking is a Methodist one and not an Anglican one. This is permitted under canon B 43(9). The bishop would need to give her consent to this regular occurrence, with the service being clearly advertised as a service of Holy Communion at which the Methodist minister presides. The Methodist minister cannot, however, preside at an Anglican baptism or wedding.

What would become possible

103. The Methodist minister could now be given Permission to Officiate (PTO) in the parish church whilst she maintains her status as a supernumerary Methodist presbyter, thus enabling her to be identified as the minister within and for that community. This would be based on legislation as envisaged in *MMiC* by which Methodist presbyters (within certain bounds) would be deemed to be clerks in holy orders and capable of being beneficed or licensed as such. A Methodist presbyter to whom that provision applied would be able to officiate at weddings (as he or she would then meet the definition of ‘clergyman’ under the Marriage Act 1949), as well as presiding at Church of England baptism and Communion services. There would be a full recognition of the ordained ministry of the supernumerary Methodist presbyter within the Church of England, who would then be able to share ministry with the incumbent in a manner agreed with the bishop, with permission from the Methodist Church to serve another Church.

Key issues

104. The Methodist presbyter is already familiar with the Church of England parish and has a strong relationship as colleagues with the Anglican vicar. Any immediate needs for formation, training and supervision can probably be met in this context.

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105. An important question would be the extent to which this specific arrangement could form part of a wider developing relationship between the parish and the circuit. Would assisting in ministry be reciprocal – might the vicar offer to take a service once a quarter in the circuit, having been made an ‘Associate Presbyter’ in the Methodist Church under Standing Order 733A? Might other ordained ministers serving in the parish and circuit also become part of this exchange, as parish and circuit begin to ask what they might be able to do if they consistently plan together and then intentionally work together where this can enhance their effectiveness in the different communities in the area? If such a relationship becomes firmly established, would there be a case for the Methodist Superintendent Minister being licensed by the bishop as, for instance, an Honorary Associate Priest within the benefice, and therefore having formal responsibilities for supporting its life?

Scenario 2: An Anglican Circuit Minister

106. The Methodist Circuit has failed to find a new minister to serve alongside the Superintendent through the normal stationing process. The new minister would have had pastoral charge of two churches in New Town, a large and growing community, and it had been hoped that they would have taken on the superintendency after one year. One of the stipendiary Anglican clergy in New Town has started to wonder whether she may have a calling to take on this post. After consultation and prayer, she asks the Superintendent if she can be stationed by the Conference to serve in that appointment.

What is currently possible

107. So far as the Methodist Church is concerned, a Church of England priest could currently serve in a Methodist Circuit as an Authorised Presbyter under Standing Order 733. Authorised Presbyters are appointed by the Conference to fulfil presbyteral duties in a Circuit. Such duties could include the leadership of pastoral care, worship and mission, or the exercise of pastoral responsibility or the exercise of pastoral charge. Authorised Presbyters are accountable for their general vocation and development as ministers to their own church, but they are accountable to the Conference for the specific tasks which they have been authorised to undertake in a particular appointment. Authorised Presbyters are not permitted to become Superintendents.

108. So far as the Church of England is concerned, however, it would not be possible for a priest to accept such an appointment in a church with which it is not in communion within the framework of ecclesiastical law.

What could become possible

109. The Church of England priest would be able to accept such an appointment and be stationed in New Town once the two churches are in communion.

110. A priest who wished to serve on the Methodist stations could be stationed by the Conference, in a similar way to the current arrangements for those who are recognised and regarded as if they were in Full Connexion. This would include serving as a Superintendent Minister. They would be accountable to the

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Superintendent (or the Chair if they were the Superintendent) for the tasks undertaken in the circuit. They would be regarded as if they were in Full Connexion.

Key issues

111. The Methodist Church could consider whether the Anglican priest would be 'Recognised and Regarded' as in Full Connexion with the Methodist Conference under SO732, or whether a new category should be introduced for recognising the ministry of Church of England priests in a way that would demonstrate the new relationship between the two Churches. Such a category would need to symbolise the sense that an Anglican priest is, in this new arrangement, accountable to the Conference for the duration of the appointment to a Methodist Circuit. A process for considering training, formation and supervision requirements would be important.
112. A minister beginning a new appointment is formally welcomed by the Circuit and promises are made by the minister and the members of the Circuit. It would be important to consider how the new relationship between the priest and the Methodist Conference might also be marked at this point.
113. Thought would need to be given to how the Anglican priest maintains her relationship to the Church of England once stationed by the Conference to New Town, e.g. through receiving Permission to Officiate from the bishop who has responsibility for it. That would also enable her to assist from time to time in Church of England parishes in the area.

Scenario 3: A Methodist Priest-in-Charge

114. The Parish of St John the Baptist, Mixton is vacant and has been for some time. The communities in the parish have faced many challenges in recent years and there are still some issues to be addressed. It is re-advertised and, after the coming into force of the new proposals, two presbyters ordained in the Methodist church apply. One is a minister ordained before the changes envisaged under *MMiC*, one after the changes.

What is currently possible

115. A Methodist minister is not able to apply for a clergy post in the Church of England. They could only do so by being accepted for ordained ministry in the Church of England, usually via an interview process with the Candidates' Panel, undertaking recommended further training, episcopal confirmation and episcopal ordination as deacon and then as a priest. Then they would be eligible to apply.

What would become possible

116. Applications from the two presbyters could be received by those responsible for the appointment at St John the Baptist, Mixton, widening the range of people who can be considered. It would be important that the Conference office was formally consulted, and appropriate procedures followed (which might need to be devised for this purpose). It is likely that, in order for a Methodist presbyter to be under the

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authority of the bishop and a freehold incumbent, the Methodist Conference would need to release the minister for service in the Church of England by giving the minister permission to serve another Church under Standing Order 735.

Key issues

117. Ordained ministers from other churches who seek posts in the Church of England are normally expected to go through the Candidates Panel process and accept its training recommendations. This is not the case in the same way with ministers from churches with which the Church of England is in communion, with the Methodist Church joining this category under the proposals, although the Candidates Panel remains available to advise bishops where requested. There would, however, be a case for developing some general guidance regarding formation, supervision and training to assist all those involved in considering applications from Methodist ministers to serve in the Church of England in stipendiary appointments.
118. How might the beginning of a new phase of ministry for the duly appointed Methodist presbyter be appropriately marked, including a new relationship with the bishop whose cure of souls they would be sharing? This could include a commissioning for ministry in the Church of England by the bishop with appropriate prayer and liturgical action (see paragraphs 50-51 above).
119. The current approach to 'Recognised and Regarded' ministers in the Methodist Church raises the wider question of how a minister can be accountable to two different churches at the same time. In this case, the Methodist Church considers the minister accountable to the Conference and through the Conference to their 'home' church, which in the case of an Anglican priest would be the licensing bishop; the Conference then becomes accountable for the minister to the bishop.
120. This issue appears at its sharpest when matters of clergy discipline arise. There are Anglican precedents for clergy serving two different churches at the same time, not least in the context of relations with Old Catholic churches under the Bonn agreement and with Lutheran churches under the Porvoo agreement. Because clergy discipline is not limited to what a cleric does in the performance of his or her duties but is also concerned with what in other contexts would be regarded as a person's private life, one could not simply say that disciplinary responsibility would reside with the church in which ministerial duties were being performed.
121. A possible solution might be to say that the church in which a person was originally ordained would always retain general disciplinary responsibility, with specific disciplinary responsibility to the other church in respect of acts and omissions while undertaking duties there. Alternatively, an arrangement (which would need to be statutory for the Church of England) might be set up under which the two church authorities designated which church's disciplinary process was applicable to an individual cleric in certain circumstances. Whatever approach is taken, it would be important to ensure that significant concerns arising from ministry in one church are always shared in an appropriate way with the other where a person is exercising ministry in both.

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Scenario 4: A New Joint Post

122. The Diocese of X and the Methodist District of Y are both centred on the city of Zedminster. The Methodist District has access to funding for a church plant aimed at University Students and the main city-centre charismatic evangelical Anglican church is keen to be involved. Everyone is happy that a suitable minister could be recruited from either church. The prime candidate is a Methodist probationer minister working in another part of the city. The bishop is keen to set up the church under a Bishop's Mission Order (BMO); although content with this situation, the incumbent of the parish where the church will initially meet and be based does not wish to be involved.

What is currently possible

123. Once ordained as a presbyter, the Methodist minister could be appointed as the ordained pastor under the legislation for LEPs and BMOs if the church plant were designated as both. A Methodist minister could then lead the congregation and preside at services. However, they could not hold the Bishop's licence or PTO, and similar restrictions on eucharistic ministry would apply to those identified at paragraph 102 above (i.e. eucharistic services at which they presided could not be considered Church of England services).

What would become possible

124. After the proposed changes the bishop would be able to license the minister to the BMO. It would then become possible for the church plant that is jointly funded by the Church of England and the Methodist Church to have a minister who is fully recognised by both churches, publicly commissioned by both and accountable to both.

Key issues

125. Work would need to be done by the Methodist Conference on how a presbyter can be accountable to a bishop whilst still being in Full Connexion. There would also be practical questions about avoiding duplication of commitments to e.g. meetings of ministers, governance bodies and ministerial review.

126. Careful thought would need to be given to formation, training and supervision, for a ministry context that is itself relatively specialised. Ideally perhaps two experienced mentors could be found, one from each church, who have a good grasp both of church planting and of the culture and institutions of their own church.

127. In order to be licensed by the bishop, the Methodist minister would need to make the Declarations and Oaths customary for Anglican clergy at this point. There should be nothing incompatible with Methodist belief here: the oath of assent is, as it were, a statement of belief necessary for holding the post; the oath of allegiance is word for word what is sworn by someone from another country attaining citizenship; and canonical obedience cannot but be required in an episcopally ordered church. Nonetheless, careful discussion would be needed

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to ensure that the Declarations and Oaths can be made with understanding and confidence.

Scenario 5: Beyond the Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP)

128. Christ Church, Fairacres was built in 1992 on a new estate. The building of the church was financed by the sale of the town centre Methodist Church site and the Methodist church moved its congregation, joined by a team from the parish church, to set up a new church on this new estate. It was set up as an LEP (Anglican / Methodist/ URC) from the beginning. It remains within the historic parish. The first two ministers were Anglicans. Since 2015 the minister has been a Methodist.

129. Under Canon B 44, the Methodist minister can take services in the LEP according to the order of service set down for the LEP by the churches concerned. The order for Holy Communion is essentially the Common Worship rite with some Free Church customs (e.g. seated silent offertory) included. Non-eucharistic worship is in a broadly recognisable charismatic evangelical style. The legal functions of the parish priest are performed (as they were when an Anglican senior curate was in post there) by the Vicar of the parish. The building is covered by a Sharing Agreement (under the 1975 Act), so Methodist weddings can take place there.

What is currently possible

130. In this scenario, full use is being made of what is currently possible for ecumenical cooperation.

What would become possible

131. The Bishop could give the Methodist minister Permission to Officiate, enabling fuller recognition by the Church of England of his ministry, including officiating at weddings and presiding at the eucharist, and also allowing him to exercise ministry in other parts of the parish as well at the invitation of the incumbent. Effectively this would extend the scope of the ministry permitted already in the LEP and enable a fuller integration of the minister into the wider life of the parish. Licensing the minister as e.g. an Honorary Associate Priest in the parish could further enhance that.

132. It might be that over time relationships are strengthened between the LEP and the parish and circuit and thereby between the parish and circuit themselves, leading them to develop the potential for cooperation more widely, with a wider exchange of ministries between the two.

133. It might be noted that the limitations of the LEP model for sharing ministries between churches are being felt in some current contexts. For instance, in the context of the initiative to make Cumbria an 'ecumenical county', it would be very helpful for the Diocese of Carlisle to be able to license Methodist ministers to posts of parish ministry, to give full recognition to their ministry in the Church of England and to integrate them better into the life of the diocese, without

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diminishing their identity as Methodist presbyters; and similarly for Anglican priests to be able to have 'Recognised and Regarded' status or the equivalent.

Key issues

134. There would be a number of parallels with issues arising from the first three scenarios in such a case. One specific issue would be the question of what might happen when the current minister left if the relationship between the Methodist minister and the Parish ministry team had developed in strong and creative ways, enhancing the wider relationship between the LEP congregation and both parish and circuit. Would there be a sense that these relationships could be jeopardised were a URC minister to be appointed next?

Scenario 6: New adventures in local unity

135. The small town of Uphill has a Methodist Church and an Anglican Church, each of which has a worshipping community of around 50 members. Although there is much faithful service and spiritual fruit in both churches, the Anglican church cannot sustain the presence of a full-time ordained minister in the town and the Methodist presbyter in pastoral charge is also responsible for three other churches in the Circuit and resident near one of them. Both churches struggle to be effective in mission to the whole of the local community, in particular those under the age of 30. They can see the benefits of working together much more closely than they do at the moment but can also envisage drawbacks with becoming united in a single-congregation LEP.

What is currently possible

136. Churches Together in England has developed a new framework for local ecumenism that provides a number of options for churches who want to work together in forms of committed partnership without adopting the model of the single-congregation LEP.

What would become possible

137. The diocese and the district could agree to fund jointly a full-time ministerial post in Uphill serving both the Methodist and the Anglican churches, with the minister being both stationed there as a Methodist presbyter and licensed by the bishop as the Priest-in-Charge. This could be done without needing to enter into any other commitments about the precise form that the emerging relationship between the churches would take.

138. The minister appointed could then work with the churches to discern how they are being called to worship and witness in Uphill, and what that might mean in terms of sharing buildings and other resources. For instance, there might be a case for choosing one church building for all church activities, thereby releasing funds that would otherwise be spent on building maintenance for new initiatives in mission. On the other hand, it might be concluded that in order for the church to be a welcoming place for the whole of the community, there was a need for greater diversity in worship, with different buildings helping to foster that. Or one of the church buildings might be developed specifically to enable community use

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for a range of activities. A minister who knows the people of both congregations and the community of the town could provide support and leadership in addressing such questions in a way that is not currently possible.

Key issues

139. There would need to be sufficient trust between the two churches for them to be willing to support such an arrangement. Thought would also have to be given to how to combine the normal time-limited terms of appointment for stationing in Methodism with an appointment under Common Tenure in the Church of England.
140. Both our churches have a commitment to ‘presence’ that is being challenged by demands on resources. Dual appointments of this kind could become a creative way of sustaining effective witness by the church in communities that have a distinctive local profile (in both urban and rural contexts) and of enabling informed strategic thinking about resources and relationships.

Conclusion

141. The scenarios sketched out in this section illustrate only a small part of the great variety of ways in which priests and presbyters may find themselves ministering to members of the other denomination. Much is already possible through the various permissions that are given by bishops (e.g. to seek and accept authorised / associate status in the Methodist Church) or the Conference (e.g. for a presbyter to serve another church), and through well-established authorisations (e.g. under canon B 43, or Standing Orders 733 and 733A). Interchangeability as proposed in *MMiC* would create greater facility and flexibility in all six of the scenarios outlined above and express in practical, visible ways the communion between our churches.
142. There are likely to be a number of recurring issues to be addressed in different situations as interchangeability of ordained ministers begins to happen. It would therefore be advisable to develop some guidelines for the practice of presbyters / priests from one church being received to serve in the other. The guidelines should include attention to:
- how suitability for such service on the part of those eligible for it is to be evaluated, and who should be involved in coming to a judgment (paragraph 98);
 - when considering assistant and joint roles, how relationships between Anglican and Methodist congregations may grow and deepen alongside the exercise of a new ordained ministry (paragraphs 105 and 131–32);
 - the appropriate category of licensing / authorization for different kinds of ministerial service in both churches (paragraphs 103, 107, 110, 111 and 131);

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- matters that would need careful reflection on the part of ministers from one church considering an appointment in the other, and how such reflection might be appropriately supported and informed (paragraphs 126–27);
- how to fulfil the expectations of both churches in such cases for ministerial collegiality, supervision, training and review in a way that avoids duplication and is manageable for the individual concerned (paragraphs 119–21 and 125).

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RECOMMENDATIONS

143. In light of this report, the faith and order bodies invite the Conference and the General Synod to adopt the following recommendations as they take forward the proposals of *MMiC*.
- i. The ‘formal declaration’ envisaged by *MMiC* at §10, referred to as the ‘first step’ towards a new relationship of communion, should include a commitment to seeking what this document terms the ‘reconciliation of structures’, to enable our churches to act and speak as one church where this serves the mission of God (paragraphs 10–22).
 - ii. The planning of an inaugural joint service or services of Holy Communion, to take place following from the acceptance of the proposals in both churches and the ordination of the first President-Bishop, should make appropriate space for repentance for past sins, for the welcoming of one another’s gifts and graces and for the commissioning of the churches for mission together, to include a specific episcopal commissioning of all ordained ministers in each church for readiness to serve in and with the other (paragraphs 23–32, 40–50 and 52–54).
 - iii. Where a minister ordained in one church is accepted to serve also in the other for the first time, a service of welcome should be held, to include prayer and appropriate liturgical action as fitting to the polity of each church (paragraph 51).
 - iv. A ‘Council event’ should be arranged to take place soon after the inaugural service, to mark the new stage on the Covenant journey, set it in the context of joint mission and service to the world and advise the churches on how the new relationship between them might best be sustained and deepened (paragraphs 55–56).
 - v. There should be further exploration of diaconal ministry in the two churches, including current developments, in terms of parallels, contrasts and the potential for mutual learning (paragraphs 94–95).