

## GENERAL SYNOD

**MISSION AND MINISTRY IN COVENANT:  
Note from the Faith and Order Commission**

**Summary**

*Mission and Ministry in Covenant* responds to a resolution of the General Synod in 2014 by outlining proposals for bringing the Church of England and the Methodist Church into communion with one another and enabling interchangeability of their presbyteral ministries. As Synod members prepare to debate the report, it is important they consider its proposals in the context of the Covenant relationship between our churches established in 2003 and of work associated with that. Members also need to be mindful of the longer history of relations between our churches, including the defeat of proposals for union at the General Synod in 1972. Having briefly outlined that background, this introductory note then comments on three key questions that have emerged from the reception of the report so far:

What difference will the proposals make?

Do the proposals fit with Anglican theology and with existing ecumenical agreements?

What consultation has there been with other churches?

Finally, it explains why some further work is being recommended before a decision is taken on initiating legislation, in response to discussion within the House of Bishops.

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**The Covenant at a cross-roads**

1. The Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church was signed in 2003, following approval for this by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference. The Covenant was based on the substantial 2001 *Common Statement*, which arose from Formal Conversations between the two churches that had commenced in 1997, more than 20 years ago. That in turn was 25 years after the narrow defeat of proposals for union between our two churches at the General Synod in 1972, proposals that had been worked on since the 1950s.
2. Following an initial statement, the 2003 Covenant included seven 'Affirmations' and six 'Commitments' (quoted in full at paragraphs 7 and 8 of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*).<sup>1</sup> The first 'Commitment' reads:

We commit ourselves, as a priority, to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church. In particular, we look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry.

3. The Covenant as signed in 2003 was therefore not intended to be a settled destination for our two churches, but rather, as the accompanying *Common Statement* says in its opening paragraph, 'a major stepping-stone on the way towards organic unity', with other steps on the journey still lying ahead. The Commitment just quoted identifies 'a united, interchangeable ministry' as the next key stage on our churches' journey towards visible unity by a series of agreed stages, to which both have pledged themselves. It would however remain at this next stage a relationship between two different churches, one Anglican and the other Methodist, just as since 1996 there has

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<sup>1</sup> *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Common Statement*, 2001, paragraphs 194–95.

been 'interchangeable ministry' between Anglican and Lutheran churches within the Porvoo Communion of churches.

4. In the final report from its second Quinquennium, the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant (JIC), which was set up following the signing of the Covenant in 2003, strongly affirmed both the goal of visible unity between our churches and the need to focus on 'interchangeable ministry' as the next major stage on this journey.<sup>2</sup> It also built on previous reports from the JIC in giving extensive attention to the question of how to move towards this next stage. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* follows on from the substantial work of the JIC in these areas and presents for the first time to both churches proposals that would make possible an 'interchangeable ministry'. If the proposals were to be adopted, a new chapter in the Covenant relationship would begin – two churches, still distinct from one another, but in a relationship of communion that takes down historic barriers between them and clears the way for deepening fellowship in the gospel, renewing momentum towards the visible unity that remains our common goal.
5. The implications of not proceeding with the proposals, or a modified version of them, would be serious. Such a decision would raise the question: can we still 'look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry', and, if not, what kind of unity are we committed to pursuing? Hence consideration by the General Synod and the Methodist Conference of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* places us at a cross-roads in the Covenant relationship.

### **The origin of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant***

6. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* is being brought to General Synod for debate because it is the response to the Synod's request in a resolution from November 2014 (in wording paralleled at the Methodist Conference) for 'the Council for Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission to work with the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church to undertake the work set out in Recommendation 1 of the Final Report.'
7. Recommendation 1 of the Final Report from the JIC read as follows:

that the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church work together to bring forward proposals for

(i) the Methodist Church to consider afresh expressing the Conference's ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry and the Church of England to recognise that ministry in the Methodist Church as a sign of continuity in faith, worship and mission in a church that is in the apostolic succession;

(ii) the Church of England and the Methodist Church to address the question of reconciling, with integrity, the existing presbyteral and diaconal ministries of our two churches, which would lead to the interchangeability of ministries.<sup>3</sup>
8. The joint drafting group set up by the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church in 2015 worked closely within the parameters that had been set by the General Synod and the

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<sup>2</sup> JIC, *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness* (2013), especially chapters 8–11,

<sup>3</sup> On why it was decided not to address diaconal ministries at this point, see *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, paragraph 15.

Methodist Conference in 2014. This can be seen in the structure of the report itself: of the two central chapters of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, chapter 2 address part (i) of the JIC recommendation, while chapter 3 addresses part (ii) of the recommendation.

9. The joint drafting group reported regularly to the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church between 2015 and summer 2017, when it concluded its work and *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* was published. Progress was also shared with the Council for Christian Unity, and revisions made in response to points raised by all three bodies.
10. In December 2016, the House of Bishops received a draft version of the report, and some further revisions were then made in light of concerns expressed there, in particular to chapter 3. In May 2017, the House of Bishops agreed that the report could now be released for public discussion in its revised form, and in December 2017 it agreed that the Business Committee should be asked to schedule a debate at Synod, with the recommendation that some further work be undertaken before a decision was taken on initiating legislation.
11. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* begins (following the preface) with a brief summary of its content, at paragraphs 1–6. The whole of the report needs to be read carefully, but the summary will help those coming fresh to the document to have a sense of the whole before they start to get to grips with the detail. At the heart of the proposals are the two interrelated actions that the Church of England and the Methodist Church are asked to take, as set out in paragraphs 10–11:

The first step would be that they each make, in terms appropriate to their own tradition and polity, a formal declaration of the new stage in their relationship that is being realised. For the Church of England, this would be expressed by saying that the Methodist Church should become one of those churches with which it is 'in communion'....

The second step would be that they make the following two formal, public commitments, beyond those made in the 2003 Covenant:

a) to share the ministry of the historic episcopate as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church of God;

b) to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches.

### **What difference will the proposals make?**

12. Acceptance of the proposals would be a profound sign of reconciliation, a healing of wounds that go back to the origins of Methodism in the eighteenth century. The generosity asked of both churches would speak powerfully of a desire for the flourishing in unity and witness of the whole Church of God, and not first and foremost the entrenchment of our own institutions.
13. For the Methodist church, they would mean a permanent change to its formal doctrine of ministry to include bishops as well as presbyters and deacons as ordained ministers; the ordaining of the presbyteral President of the Conference as a bishop by bishops recognized by the Church of England as belonging within the historic episcopate; and the reception by the whole church of the episcopal ministry of Presidents and, in due course, past Presidents. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* argues that these would be

developments that are faithful to Methodist ecclesiology, but members of the General Synod should not underestimate their profound significance for the Methodist Church and the challenge that they represent.

14. For members of Church of England congregations, the impact of the proposals is likely to be felt most directly in the new possibilities they would create for sharing in ministry and mission with Methodist presbyters and the local churches in which they serve. A priest / presbyter exercising ministry in both churches at the same time would powerfully express the new relationship of communion between our two churches and could become a catalyst for local Christian communities to discover new ways of worshipping and witnessing together. This might mean Methodist ministers also receiving PTO or being licensed as NSMs in order to work closely with the Parishes serving the same communities as their Circuits, with reciprocal arrangements for Anglican clergy; or it could mean the creation of joint appointments. It is this form of 'interchangeability', rather than stipendiary / itinerant ministers moving between churches in their full-time appointments, that has the clearest potential to transform relations between Parishes and Circuits in mission.
15. The contexts where the impact of this could be greatest are likely to include those where there are serious challenges in sustaining a Christian presence. Some of these would be urban areas, perhaps particularly those where there are high levels of deprivation, but there is also a general relevance here for rural ministry. *Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church*, a Church of England report published in 2015, and *A Discipling Presence*, produced by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches in 2017 and commended by, among others, Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson (National Rural Officer of the Church of England), both point to the importance of ecumenical cooperation for the life and mission of the rural church.<sup>4</sup>
16. Whilst such co-operation is already possible and practised in many rural contexts, priests / presbyters exercising ministry in both churches at the same time could build on that in new ways. These would include helping one another to maintain a reliable pattern of public worship in the communities they serve, fostering imaginative initiatives in mission, and enabling strategic decisions to be made about which communities will be the particular focus for ministers serving overlapping geographical areas. Indeed, the ability to deploy presbyters / priests to serve 'multi-church groups' of both Anglican and Methodist churches could release ministers for more sustained presence in and deeper engagement with specific communities.
17. Some – not all – of what is envisaged under 'interchangeability' is already possible under the provisions of Canon B 44 for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs). As well as meaning that, for the first time, priests / presbyters from one church could be appointed to offices in the other (e.g. in the Church of England Honorary Assistant Curate, Team Vicar, Incumbent), the proposals of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* would enable priests / presbyters to serve in one another's churches without recourse to setting up an LEP. Where such service seems right to the parish and the diocese, it will be simpler to initiate and more flexible to operate, with no additional institutional

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<sup>4</sup> *Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church*, 2015; available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GS%20Misc%201092%20Released%20for%20Mission%20-%20growing%20the%20rural%20church.pdf>; *A Discipling Presence: A workbook to help promote and sustain an effective Christian presence in rural communities* (Methodist Publishing, 2017).

structures being required, and it will rest on a deeper level of recognition and reconciliation of ministries in the context of a relationship of ecclesial communion.

### **Do the proposals fit with Anglican theology and existing ecumenical agreements?**

18. Much of the discussion within the Church of England so far has focused on the second of the two commitments noted above: 'to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches'. Were the proposals to come into effect, the majority of Methodist presbyters would for some time have been ordained by the presbyteral President of the Conference, and not by a bishop. Given the Church of England's historic insistence on episcopal ordination as necessary for ordained ministry within the Church of England, how could they be welcomed as eligible to serve?
19. The case for doing this is set out in chapter 3 of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, at paragraphs 54–73. This section of the report uses the concept of 'bearable anomaly' from the 1998 Lambeth Conference (despite its subsequent misuse in other contexts) as a valuable shorthand for indicating some key parameters, which might be summarised as follows. An Anglican church, fully committed to the historic episcopate and to the consistent practice of episcopal ordination for all ordained ministers, is able in exceptional and specific circumstances to sustain a welcome to ministers not ordained episcopally to serve as ordained ministers. Those exceptional and specific circumstances obtain only when a previously non-episcopal church has (a) received the historic episcopate, (b) become committed to the consistent practice of episcopal ordination for all ordained ministers and (c) entered into a relationship of communion with the Anglican church in question.
20. These parameters are well-established in the ecumenical theology and policy of the Anglican Communion, as summed up most recently in 'Receiving One Another's Ordained Ministry', presented by the Inter Anglican Standing Committee on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFUO) to the 2016 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC).<sup>5</sup> In Resolution 16.19, the ACC stated about this report that it 'commends it for study *and action* in the provinces of the Anglican Communion as they seek to order their ecumenical relationships' (emphasis added).
21. It is the responsibility of IASCUFUO to ensure consistency of approach across the different ecumenical statements and actions of the Anglican Communion. Clearly, IASCUFUO sees no contradiction here with the agreed statements pertaining to ordained ministry of e.g. the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, or the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue. Moreover, the Faith and Order Commission asked IASCUFUO to look at an earlier draft of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* in 2016 and then again at the final version in 2017, and on both occasions received a letter from the Anglican Communion's Director for Unity, Faith and Order reporting a very supportive reception for the report and its proposals.

### **What consultation has there been with other churches?**

22. The Methodist Church in Britain relates directly to three Anglican churches: the Church of England, the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church. The faith and order bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church have been attentive to communication with the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church

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<sup>5</sup> Report available at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/219357/A4-UFO-Reports.pdf>; 'Receiving One Another's Ministries' is section 2.e.ii, at pp. 21–27.

throughout the process of preparing *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, and informal responses were received from both prior to the House of Bishops meeting in May last year.

23. A consultation was then held in December for representatives of the four churches. Representatives from the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church expressed support for our churches in taking forward the proposals, and a number of ways in which the proposals might link into developments in their own relations with the Methodist Church were reviewed. It was agreed that regular consultation would be important were General Synod to initiate the process of preparing relevant legislation.
24. The chairs of the faith and order bodies have written to their closest counterparts in the three denominations represented, together with the Methodist Church, by observers at the Council for Christian Unity: the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and the United Reformed Church. Formal responses from all three have now been received and will be considered at meetings of the Faith and Order Commission and the Council for Christian Unity. No indication has been given that adopting the proposals of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* would have a negative impact on relations with these churches or constitute an obstacle to further unity with them.

### **Why is further work being recommended?**

25. A diversity of views has been expressed about the proposals in *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* in discussions at the House of Bishops. Some members of the House do not accept the case made in the report for extending the welcome of 'presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches' to those ordained in the Methodist Church prior to its coming to share in the historic episcopate. The report was however written in response to a resolution of the General Synod that asked for work in accordance with the JIC's recommendation for the reconciliation of 'existing' ministries, and it is clear that the Methodist Church would not support proposals if they included a rite that looked like episcopal ordination for its existing ministers, or envisaged different treatment of those ordained before and after the proposals are implemented. Bearing the anomaly together, for a limited period of time, as churches now both sharing in the historic episcopate, of some ministers being episcopally ordained and some not is therefore integral to the proposals as requested by Synod and Conference.
26. Three other areas were touched on at the December debate in the House of Bishops where there is however scope for refining and clarifying the proposals set out in *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, in order to assist Synod in coming to a decision as to whether to proceed with legislation. The first of these concerns the journey towards unity, on which the report comments especially in chapter 1, at paragraphs 10–13. Are both churches clear about how the steps they are being asked to take by the report relate to the goal of what the first Commitment of the Covenant calls 'the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church'? What do we mean by 'organic unity', what might it look like for the Church of England and the Methodist Church, and are we still committed to seeking it? Would the proposals release new energy and understanding for moving towards a deeper unity in mission between our churches, or could they encourage a kind of complacency in which we settle for what we have? And how might they draw other churches with us 'on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church'? For some, confidence that accepting the proposals will indeed form part of a journey towards the goal of visible unity for our

churches is crucial for making the ‘anomaly’ discussed at paragraphs 54–73 of the report one that could and should be borne.

27. The second area concerns how the historic episcopate will be shared by the Methodist Church. The model that *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* adopted from the JIC, which had explored it in some detail, is that of the ‘President-bishop’, as set out in chapter 2. It fits well with the focusing of oversight for the Methodist Church in the Conference, with the representative ministry of the Presidency of the Conference and with the unique role of Presidents and past Presidents of Conference in presiding at ordinations. It would also lead to a practice of episcopacy that looked and felt different from that of the Church of England. While the report affirms this difference as a proper expression of the Lambeth Quadrilateral’s emphasis on the universality of the historic episcopate ‘locally adapted in the methods of its administration’, concerns remain for some members of the House of Bishops about just *how* different it would be. Would it inhibit the development of proper collegiality between those ordained as bishops in the Church of England and those ordained as bishops in the Methodist Church, and thereby also limit sharing in oversight (see paragraphs 90–92 of the report)? And how would the episcopal orders of Presidents and past Presidents of Conference be expressed in ministry and recognized by others within the Methodist Church?
28. The third area concerns the working out of interchangeability, including further exploration of issues that are flagged in chapter 4 of the report at paragraphs 84–89 and 94. These include training, induction and support for those who may serve in a church other than the one in which they were ordained; the formal dimensions of licensing or granting of PTO and parallel provisions in the Methodist Church, with associated questions about discipline and accountability; and what kind of action, including liturgical action, might mark the new relationship between a Methodist presbyter and the diocesan bishop – or an Anglican priest and the Conference and its President.
29. Further work on all three areas can build on treatment in reports from the JIC and on relevant discussion that took place within the joint drafting group for *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* and the faith and order bodies of the two churches. With regard to the second and third areas in particular, until the legislative framework for the proposals begins to take shape in both churches at the direction of the General Synod and the Methodist Conference, there will be limits as to how much can confidently be stated. While this further work will therefore require careful attention and consultation, it need not take a long time, and it is hoped that progress can be reported back to Synod this year. Synod members should also be aware that as the formal process of approval in both churches is likely to take a minimum of two years (in the case of the Church of England because of the probable reference to dioceses under Article 8), unless the legislative process is triggered at the July sessions of Synod this year, it is unlikely to be completed within the current Quinquennium.

The Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry  
Chair, Faith and Order Commission  
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## MISSION AND MINISTRY IN COVENANT

### Report from The Faith and Order bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church

#### Preface

This report has been prepared for the Conference of the Methodist Church in Great Britain and for the Church of England General Synod. We write as the co-Chairs of the drafting group which was asked to undertake this task by the faith and order bodies of our two churches. Those bodies have agreed that it should now be released prior to consideration by the Conference and General Synod.

The main proposals, if implemented, will enable an interchange of presbyteral ministries between our churches that has not been possible since the parting of the ways between Anglicans and Methodists in the late eighteenth century. We believe that these proposals on episcopal ministry and on the reconciliation of presbyteral ministries are congruent with the teaching and polity of our two churches and that they can now be commended to the churches for acceptance.<sup>1</sup> We also believe that accepting the proposals made here will enable a new depth of communion between our churches and enhance our common mission, to the glory of God.

We are grateful to the members of the drafting group for their work in preparing this text. We have been conscious in our work that Anglicans and Methodists will approach it with to some extent different perspectives, priorities and concerns. It might have been simpler to have written parallel versions, but the drafting group has remained committed to the production of a single report for both churches. Inevitably, this means that the content of certain sections will be more relevant or accessible to some readers than others. Reading ecumenical reports – like all effort directed towards deepening relations among Christians – requires qualities of empathy and patience.

We are convinced that now is the time for this welcome step, which is the fruit of many years of careful work and study, and we warmly commend the report for prayerful reading in the churches.

The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker

The Revd Dr Neil Richardson

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<sup>1</sup> We gratefully acknowledge that we are building on foundations established by others, including the reports of the Joint Implementation Commission for the Anglican-Methodist Covenant in England and internationally the Anglican-Methodist International Commission (AMIC), 1996, *Sharing in The Apostolic Communion* (Lake Junaluska, NC: World Methodist Council), and the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM), 2014, *Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches* (London: Anglican Consultative Council).



## MISSION AND MINISTRY IN COVENANT

### SUMMARY

1. The Church of England and the Methodist Church in Great Britain<sup>2</sup> have travelled a long way together in their relationship since the eighteenth century, and especially so in recent years. The Anglican-Methodist Covenant of 2003 is the principal theological foundation of this report, which builds directly on the affirmations and commitments with regard to church, ministry and oversight made by our two churches when it was signed. In their debates on the final report from the Joint Implementation Commission for the Covenant in 2014, the Church of England's General Synod and the Conference of the Methodist Church approved the following recommendation:

that the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church work together to bring forward proposals for:

- i) the Methodist Church to consider afresh expressing the Conference's ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry and the Church of England to recognise that ministry in the Methodist Church as a sign of continuity in faith, worship and mission in a church that is in the apostolic succession;
  - ii) the Church of England and the Methodist Church to address the question of reconciling, with integrity, the existing presbyteral and diaconal ministries of our two churches, which would lead to the interchangeability of ministries.
2. Responding to this decision by the General Synod and the Conference, the report proposes that our churches are now ready to take a new step towards full visible unity in a relationship of communion with one another, sustaining shared commitments regarding episcopal and presbyteral ministries. Such a relationship of communion between two churches does not mean structural unity, or an end to our distinctive forms of church polity. It establishes a framework at national level that enables new and creative initiatives in mission and ministry to be taken, where this is the desire of people from both our churches.
  3. The report consists of four main chapters. The first chapter sets the context for the proposals of the chapters that follow by showing how they are grounded both in the 2003 Covenant commitments our churches have made and in their common calling to share in the mission of God. It outlines two interrelated and inseparable actions that our churches could take in order to respond to the recommendations of the final report of the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC), which were accepted by both churches in 2014. First, they would make a formal declaration of a new stage in their relationship. Second, they would undertake two formal, public commitments, beyond those made in the 2003 Covenant:
    - a) to share the ministry of the historic episcopate as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church of God;
    - b) to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches.

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<sup>2</sup> In the remainder of the report, the Methodist Church in Great Britain is generally referred to as 'the Methodist Church'.

4. The second chapter considers the first of these two commitments, addressing in particular the question of what it would mean for the Methodist Church to express the Conference's ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry in such a way that the Methodist Church can be recognised by Anglican churches as sharing in the historic episcopate. It affirms that the idea developed by the JIC of a 'President-bishop' can be accepted by Anglicans as an instance of the historic episcopate 'locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church'.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, it also fits with the distinctive theology and self-understanding of the Methodist Church, and in particular the centrality of the Conference for *episkope*.
5. The third chapter focuses on the second commitment, to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches. It explores the substantial common ground between our two churches regarding the ministry of presbyters / priests, acknowledging that the difference in terminology reflects some differences in understanding. It then turns to the particular question of how the Church of England could offer such a welcome to all Methodist presbyters, given its historic commitment to the norm of episcopal ordination for all priests. It draws on the well-established concept of 'anomaly' in Anglican ecumenical thinking, to describe something that churches may have to bear together for a limited time on their journey to unity. It emphasises that this aspect of the report's proposals rests on the recognition already given by the Church of England to the Methodist Church's ordained ministries and to its exercise of oversight, and on the significance for the whole Methodist Church – including all its presbyters – of receiving the historic episcopate and entering into communion as a church with the Church of England.
6. Finally, the fourth chapter gives a brief overview of legislative changes needed to put the report's proposals into effect. It identifies some areas where work might usefully be commissioned for completion prior to full implementation of these proposals. It offers a set of recommendations that might be adopted by both churches at the point where the proposals are finally agreed. It also sets out a provisional timetable for how the proposals it contains might be taken through the requisite processes of approval in our churches.

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<sup>3</sup> From resolution 11 of the 1888 Lambeth Conference, whose four points subsequently became known as the 'Lambeth Quadrilateral'; see <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/1888/resolution-11?author=Lambeth+Conference&year=1888>.

## 1. UNITY, MISSION AND THE ANGLICAN-METHODIST COVENANT

7. The Anglican-Methodist Covenant of 2003 includes the following affirmations:

- 1) We affirm one another's churches as true churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and as truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.
- 2) We affirm that in both our churches the word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are duly administered and celebrated.
- 3) We affirm that both our churches confess in word and life the apostolic faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the ecumenical Creeds.
- 4) We affirm that one another's ordained and lay ministries are given by God as instruments of God's grace, to build up the people of God in faith, hope and love, for the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care and to share in God's mission in the world.
- 5) We affirm that one another's ordained ministries possess both the inward call of the Holy Spirit and Christ's commission given through the Church.
- 6) We affirm that both our churches embody the conciliar, connexional nature of the Church and that communal, collegial and personal oversight (*episkope*) is exercised within them in various forms.
- 7) We affirm that there already exists a basis for agreement on the principles of episcopal oversight as a visible sign and instrument of the communion of the Church in time and space.

Four affirmations (1, 2, 4 and 7) relate closely to the proposals of the present report: they include the affirmations of each other's churches and ministries, lay and ordained, and of a basis for an agreement on the principles of episcopal oversight.

8. In signing the Covenant, our two churches also made the following commitments to one another:

- 1) We commit ourselves, as a priority, to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's Church. In particular, we look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry.
- 2) We commit ourselves to realise more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our traditions, taking steps to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service in our needy world.
- 3) We commit ourselves to continue to welcome each other's baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches.
- 4) We commit ourselves to encourage forms of eucharistic sharing, including eucharistic hospitality, in accordance with the rules of our respective churches.
- 5) We commit ourselves to listen to each other and to take account of each other's concerns, especially in areas that affect our relationship as churches.

- 6) 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.

For the purposes of this present report, two commitments (1 and 6) are especially relevant: the commitments 'to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches' and 'to continue to develop structures of joint or shared communal, collegial and personal oversight'.

9. Since the signing of the Covenant much work has been done, especially by the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC). This led, in 2014, to the annual Conference of the Methodist Church and the November sessions of the General Synod of the Church of England approving the three major recommendations of the final report of the JIC, *The Challenge of the Covenant*.<sup>4</sup> One recommendation (the first) in particular,<sup>5</sup> gives rise to this present report:

that the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church work together to bring forward proposals for

- i) the Methodist Church to consider afresh expressing the Conference's ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry and the Church of England to recognise that ministry in the Methodist Church as a sign of continuity in faith, worship and mission in a church that is in the apostolic succession;
  - ii) the Church of England and the Methodist Church to address the question of reconciling, with integrity, the existing presbyteral and diaconal ministries of our two churches, which would lead to the interchangeability of ministries.
10. In responding to this recommendation, the present report proposes that our churches are ready to move to a new stage in the search for full visible unity, beyond what was established by the Covenant in 2003. This would involve our churches taking two interrelated and inseparable steps. The first step would be that they each make, in terms appropriate to their own tradition and polity, a formal declaration of the new stage in their relationship that is being realised. For the Church of England, this would be expressed by saying that the Methodist Church should become one of those churches with which it is 'in communion'. All baptized Christians have communion with one another in the one Lord Jesus Christ, and recent studies on the doctrine of the church have found rich resources in the New Testament and patristic treatment of communion (*koinonia* in Greek). For Anglicans, however, being in communion *as churches* – within the Anglican Communion, first and foremost, but also with non-Anglican churches as is proposed here – signifies a profound level of mutual belonging and trust, which in turn makes possible particular forms of cooperation and exchange.
  11. The second step would be that they make the following two formal, public commitments, beyond those made in the 2003 Covenant:
    - a) to share the ministry of the historic episcopate as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church of God;
    - b) to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches.

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<sup>4</sup> 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, pp125–145; General Synod (GS) 1971.

<sup>5</sup> 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)*, recommendation 1, para 46.

12. While acknowledging that this second step would involve significant changes for both our churches and poses particular challenges for each of them, it needs to be remembered that the two parts of it are parts of a whole, with both parts being inseparable from the first step, which is a new relationship of communion between our churches. Neither the declaration about ecclesial relations nor the two commitments about episcopal and presbyteral ministry can be made in isolation. The attention given to the ordained ministries of presbyters / priests and bishops in the report presupposes the ecumenical consensus of the past 50 years that ordained ministries must be understood in relation to the ministry of all the baptized in the service of God's mission. The context for the close attention in this report to matters of episcopal and presbyteral ministry is concern for growth towards the goal of visible unity between our churches, for the sake of fuller and more faithful participation in the mission of God in which the ministries of all can flourish, lay as well as ordained.
13. The affirmations and commitments of the Covenant continue to guide our work. First among the commitments is the desire for unity between our churches. The proposals contained in this report stem from this commitment to overcome remaining divisions. These proposals seek to provide a framework for enabling 'a united, interchangeable ministry' (Commitment 1). This marks a further stage on our journey together. We believe that our churches have moved to a position of agreement where the realisation of a united ministry is both possible and necessary. The mutual recognition of each other's presbyteral ministers and the sharing of their ministry would be both the fruit of the relationship of communion established through the proposals set out here and a visible sign of our unity.
14. Accepting this framework would require different accompanying actions from our churches. In each case, these will involve significant developments in historic polity and self-understanding, and assurance will need to be given that these can be faithful to our callings. In particular, the Methodist Church will need to find a way to receive the ministry of the historic episcopate, while the Church of England will need to find a way to enable Methodist presbyters not ordained by a bishop within the historic episcopate to exercise ordained ministry within the Church of England by invitation.
15. Two further matters are worth noting in terms of the wider context for these proposals. First, the recommendation from *The Challenge of the Covenant* quoted above (paragraph 9) refers to the interchangeability of diaconal as well as presbyteral ministries. The work of the JIC included conversations that identified points of convergence and divergence in the understanding of diaconal ministry held in our two churches.<sup>6</sup> 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 and is therefore beyond the scope of this present report. It is further noted that the 2014 report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM) found that a 'common understanding of the diaconate is not an essential requirement for the churches to enter into communion'.<sup>7</sup>
16. Interchangeability of presbyteral ministries cannot be separated from interchangeability of ministries of oversight. This would find particular expression through participation in one another's services for the ordination of bishops. There is an important precedent here in the Porvoo Communion of Churches, of which the Church of England is a member, where interchangeability between Anglican and Lutheran churches includes episcopal and presbyteral (but not diaconal) ministries.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> JIC, 2011, 'Conferring About the Diaconate', *Moving Forward in Covenant*, Appendix 1, pp 42–50.

<sup>7</sup> AMICUM, 2014, *Into All the World*, p 52.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.porvoocommunion.org/>.

17. Second, it is useful to locate the proposals contained in this report within the broader sphere of relations with other churches. Both the Church of England and the Methodist Church belong to worldwide families: namely, the Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council, respectively. Anglicans and Methodists have close relations, though in different ways, with the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Ireland. The Methodist Church and the Church in Wales are two of the five 'Covenanted Churches in Wales'. In Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Synod of the Scotland District of the Methodist Church and the National Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church have a formal partnership which expresses their commitment to work for ever-closer co-operation in serving Christ. In Ireland, the Anglican and Methodist churches are in a covenant relationship and have already implemented the interchangeability of presbyteral ministry.
18. More widely, both the Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council have a long-standing theological dialogue and deepening relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, as well as other world communions. We believe that the proposals contained in this report are fully consistent with agreements made in those dialogues, and moreover that their implementation could do much to revitalise the movement towards greater visible unity, not only in Anglican-Methodist relations internationally, but in other ecumenical partnerships as well. Nearer home, both the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Britain have been enriched by the presence and contribution in Britain of people formed in their faith in Anglican, Methodist or other Christian traditions from many different parts of the world. Sharing the gospel in a country whose ethnic and cultural diversity continues to grow presents particular challenges. Likewise, the global situation of poverty and violence makes it urgent for Christians to speak and act together. All this indicates that deepening relationships of communion on the way to the full visible unity of the Church are essential for the effective proclamation of the gospel that the world might believe.
19. Commitment to making the changes required to enter this new stage in our relationship (set out in paragraphs 10–12) would be costly. As will become clear on reading through the subsequent chapters of this report, that cost would be significant in terms of resources for both our churches: staff time, sessions at the Conference and General Synod with all the preparation and financial expenditure they require, and consultations and meetings involving other church bodies. The work would be likely to last an absolute minimum of two years from the point of first consideration by the Conference and General Synod to completion and implementation, and more likely longer. It is therefore only responsible to ask: is it worth it? Whilst our commitment to the Covenant relationship and to honouring the promises our two churches have made to one another is a strong reason for being prepared to give the required resources to this work, these proposals also stem from our commitment to sharing in God's mission, to witness and to evangelism. Three major reasons might be given for this claim, each of which could be articulated at much greater length than is attempted here.
  - a) First, our churches are committed to growing together towards 'the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God' (Ephesians 4:13). The Church is called to be visibly one, so that its unity in Christ may be realised and the world may believe. There is therefore a gospel imperative to consider and respond to any serious opportunity to move towards full visible unity. This report claims that our churches now have such an opportunity to move further towards that goal.
  - b) Second, we are committed to a gospel of reconciliation and to witnessing in our lives, our communities and our institutions to the power and the joy of that gospel. Even if many outside our churches take for granted or shrug their shoulders at our long-standing divisions, that is no reason for us to perpetuate them. Our separation is a wound in the Body of Christ for which our two churches share responsibility in both the past and the present. What kind of prayerful repentance, restoration and costly reconciliation is God calling us to engage in? The Methodist Church is unique in being a church which began as

a movement within the Church of England. Entering into a relationship of ecclesial communion after more than two centuries of separation would be a powerful act of healing and reconciliation.

- c) A third reason for this development is to seek to transform the mission dynamic in our communities. Cooperation and working together should enable a more effective witness – just as Paul and Apollos needed to be partners, not rivals, if the church at Corinth was to flourish (1 Corinthians 3). Yet in our present context, Christians in this country sharing in worship, witness and evangelism across denominations are likely to encounter formal limits to what they can do together, which can consume time and energy in ways that seem a distraction from the real work of the Church. The proposals in this report seek to enable the releasing of time and energy for worship and mission.
20. The issues and challenges involved in contemporary Christian mission go beyond the Church of England and the Methodist Church, but our two churches have the opportunity to give a lead in developing an effective partnership in mission which might similarly inspire and engage others. The hope would be that the proposals of this report can become a catalyst for wider change and renewal and open up new ways of sustaining a hopeful, growing Christian presence in numerous communities.

## 2. 'TO SHARE THE MINISTRY OF THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE'

21. As set out in the Introduction, the framework proposed by this report comprises a joint declaration by the Church of England and the Methodist Church of being in communion as churches and the making of two further commitments under the Covenant:
- a) to share the ministry of the historic episcopate as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church of God;
  - b) to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches.

This chapter focuses on the first of these, and in particular its implications for the Methodist Church. While the first part outlines some of the central issues, the second part proposes a way forward for the Methodist Church in receiving the ministry of the historic episcopate.

### The significance of the historic episcopate

22. Both churches maintain a strong sense of continuity in apostolic faith and mission, in the case of the Church of England through its bishops in succession to the apostles, and in the case of the Methodist Church through the corporate oversight (*episkope*) down the years of its Conference as the body which has ordained ministers. The Church of England is a church ordered within the historic episcopate, with bishops ordained 'to be shepherds of Christ's flock and guardians of the faith of the apostles, proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom and leading his people in mission'.<sup>9</sup> Despite this obvious difference in the way in which the Church of England and the Methodist Church have sought to maintain their continuity in the apostolic faith and mission, the JIC found that 'the Covenant is premised on agreement in principle about the historic episcopate'.<sup>10</sup>
23. It is worth noting three characteristics of the historic episcopate as understood by Anglicans. First, it is *personal*: 'The historic episcopate is a particular expression of personal *episkope*. There is no substitute for person-to-person pastoral ministry – with all its risks and vulnerability'.<sup>11</sup> Second, it is *historic*: 'It is an expression of the visible historical continuity of the Church today with the Church of the apostles', even though 'it is not dependent on a hypothetical unbroken chain of hands on heads'.<sup>12</sup> Third, it is *received*. The historic episcopate cannot be created *de novo*; a church cannot simply bring it into existence by and for itself, although it may have different expressions in different contexts. All our churches are debtors to the wider Church, the Church catholic, and our highest aspiration is simply 'to do what the Church does', not 'our own thing'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, 2007, *Ordination Service: Study Edition* (London: Church House Publishing), 'The Ordination and Consecration of a Bishop', p 55.

<sup>10</sup> JIC, 2011, *Moving Forward in Covenant*, para 40.

<sup>11</sup> JIC, 2013, *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, chapter 11, 'Signs of continuity in faith, worship and mission', p 4.

<sup>12</sup> JIC, 2013, *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, chapter 11, 'Signs of continuity in faith, worship and mission', p 4.

<sup>13</sup> JIC, 2013, *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, chapter 11, 'Signs of continuity in faith, worship and mission', p 4. Cf. eg Meissen Conversations, 1988, *Meissen Common Statement*, §§16–17, available at [https://www.ekd.de/english/download/meissen\\_engl\\_.pdf](https://www.ekd.de/english/download/meissen_engl_.pdf); Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches, 1999, *Called to Witness and Service: The Reuilly Common Statement with Essays on Church, Eucharist and Ministry* (London: Church House Publishing), pp 30–32.



24. Anglican ecumenical documents have repeatedly emphasised that the historic episcopate is not essential to being a true church.<sup>14</sup> So why, then, is it necessary for the Methodist Church to receive it as an integral part of the framework that enables the interchangeability of presbyteral ministries with the Church of England? The answer is to be found in the ecumenical strategy of the Anglican Communion as this was articulated in the Lambeth Quadrilateral in 1888. Ever since, Anglicans have consistently maintained that establishing a relationship of communion with other churches rests on the presence of four elements: the Scriptures, the historic creeds, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the historic episcopate 'locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church'.<sup>15</sup> It is this last element that has proved so difficult in Anglican-Methodist relations in the past. Nevertheless, the flexibility with which this element is stated, together with ecumenical developments in the understanding of the nature of the Church in recent years, means that receiving the historic episcopate need no longer constitute an insuperable obstacle between Anglicans and Methodists.
25. The Methodist Church is ordered with the Methodist Conference as the corporate body exercising *episkope* as a sign of continuity in the apostolic communion.<sup>16</sup> Continuity in the apostolic faith and mission is maintained in the Methodist Connexion as all local Methodist churches are grouped together in Circuits and Districts, bound together in a single unit of oversight under the Conference. The Methodist Church has, on several occasions, stated that it is willing to receive the sign of the historic episcopate (see paragraphs 27–29 below). As a result of the work of the JIC, the Methodist Church has agreed to 'consider afresh expressing the Conference's ministry of oversight in a personal form of connexional, episcopal ministry' and the Church of England has agreed to consider how it might 'recognise that ministry in the Methodist Church as a sign of continuity in faith, worship and mission in a church that is in the apostolic succession'.<sup>17</sup>
26. The proposals contained in this present report offer a way for the Methodist Church to receive the historic episcopate as a sign of its apostolicity (that is to say, its continuity in the apostolic tradition) without compromising its polity and ecclesiology. The affirmations contained in the Anglican-Methodist Covenant and restated in *Embracing the Covenant* (2008) make it clear that receiving the historic episcopate would not affect the status of the Methodist Church as such for it is already a church in the apostolic tradition:

In the Covenant we have affirmed one another's churches as 'true churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and as truly participating in the apostolic mission...'. We have affirmed that 'in both our churches the word of God is authentically preached and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are duly administered and celebrated'. We have affirmed that both our churches 'confess in word and life the apostolic faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the ecumenical Creeds'. We have gone on to affirm the authenticity of one another's ordained and lay ministries as bearing Christ's commission and the authenticity of the ministries of oversight in both our churches. In our covenant relationship, our unity is already expressed in many forms of shared ministry and mission.<sup>18</sup>

Methodists and Anglicans have affirmed that apostolic tradition in the Church means:

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<sup>14</sup> JIC, 2008, *Embracing the Covenant*, p 25.

<sup>15</sup> The Lambeth Conference of 1888, Resolution 11(d).

<sup>16</sup> JIC, 2013, *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, chapter 9, 'Developing bonds of Communion', paras 17–18, pp 4–5.

<sup>17</sup> 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)*, Recommendation 1.

<sup>18</sup> JIC, 2008, *Embracing the Covenant*, p 25.

Continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibility, communion in prayer, love, joy, and suffering, service to the sick and needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each.<sup>19</sup>

27. The Methodist Church, in its formal statement on the nature of the Church, *Called to Love and Praise* (1999), accepts the ecumenical consensus in the landmark *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (WCC, 1982) that the historic episcopate is 'a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church'.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the Methodist Church does not accept that the historic episcopate is essential for the faithful exercise of ministry.<sup>21</sup>
28. It is a principle of Methodist ecumenical strategy that 'Methodists rule out no development compatible with our ethos which strengthens the unity and effectiveness in mission of the Church'.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Methodists have repeatedly expressed their willingness to receive the historic episcopate as a sign of Methodism's continuity with the Church universal, membership of which it cherishes,<sup>23</sup> and for the sake of greater visible unity. As long ago as 1985, the Methodist Conference concluded that 'the acceptance of the historic episcopate would not violate our doctrinal standards'. Furthermore, the historic episcopate would be 'a valuable sign of apostolicity'.<sup>24</sup>
29. The JIC, in its 2013 report, noted that the Conference statement *Episcopé and Episcopacy* (2000) confirms the Methodist Church's willingness 'to receive the sign of episcopacy' on the understanding that 'partner churches acknowledge that the Methodist Church has been and is part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, and accept that different interpretations of the sign exist' – an acknowledgement that the Church of England has made in the affirmations of the Methodist Covenant. The JIC also noted that 'the Methodist Church expects to engage in dialogue to clarify the nature and the benefits of the gift' and that 'the Methodist Church insists that all ministries, including those of oversight, are exercised within the ministry of the whole people of God and at its service, rather than in isolation from it and in supremacy over it'.<sup>25</sup>
30. By receiving the sign of the historic episcopate, the Methodist Church would not be committing itself to having bishops that will exercise an episcopal ministry in exactly the same way as bishops in the Church of England. Significant differences, in fact, exist within the Anglican Communion about the exercise of episcopal ministry and how the office of bishop fits into wider church polity. Thus the Methodist Church may wish to consider how Anglican bishops in Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and elsewhere exercise their episcopal ministry and how these relate to governance structures. Reflection on the experience and practice of episcopacy in other parts of world Methodism reveals a variety of expressions of episcopal ministry. Many, but not all, Methodist churches express this ministry primarily through their bishops, although the office is understood and functions differently in the different branches of Methodism.<sup>26</sup> Nor is it necessary for Methodists to subscribe to a particular theology of the

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<sup>19</sup> World Council of Churches, 1982, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva), M34. See also AMICUM, 2014, *Into All the World*. London: Anglican Consultative Council, pp 19–26.

<sup>20</sup> The Methodist Conference, 1985, *British Methodist Response to the Lima Text*, para 4.3.4 and 1999, *Called to Love and Praise*, para 4.6.9.

<sup>21</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* M37–8, quoted in The Methodist Conference, 1999, *Called to Love and Praise*, p 50.

<sup>22</sup> The Methodist Conference, 1999, *Called to Love and Praise*, p 50.

<sup>23</sup> See Clause 4 of the *Deed of Union*.

<sup>24</sup> Methodist Conference, 1985, *British Methodist Response to the Lima Text*, para 4.3.4.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in JIC, 2013, *The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness*, chapter 11, 'Signs of Continuity in Faith, Worship and Mission', p 7, para 25; The Methodist Conference, 2002, *Episcopé and Episcopacy*, Guidelines 5 and 7.

<sup>26</sup> AMICUM, 2014, *Into All the World*. London: Anglican Consultative Council, pp35-46.

episcopate. Different theologies of the episcopate exist among Anglicans and in other churches that are in communion with the Church of England, notably the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran members of the Porvoo Communion of Churches, where teaching that there is one order of ministry only, not three, would be common, and where there were significant changes to the form of the episcopacy at and after the Reformation.

### Episcopacy and connexionalism

31. Historically, the Methodist Church has exercised a corporate and connexional form of *episkope* (the New Testament word for 'oversight'). If the Methodist Church is to receive the sign of the historic episcopate 'locally adapted' to its particular context, it is necessary to consider how the reception of the historic episcopate relates to the connexional polity of the Methodist Church. Much of this territory has already been carefully explored by the JIC.<sup>27</sup>
32. The connexional principle is fundamental to Methodist ecclesiology.<sup>28</sup> It enshrines 'a vital truth about the nature of the Church' and 'witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God'.<sup>29</sup> The whole Methodist community, consisting of Local Churches grouped in Circuits, is bound together in the Connexion, a visible expression of the living communion that should always characterise the Church of Christ. Connexionalism expresses a consciousness that Christians are bound together in the Church spiritually, sacramentally, pastorally and constitutionally at all levels. Therefore, oversight is exercised corporately by ministers and lay people on behalf and with the authority of the annual Conference. All who exercise oversight in the Methodist Church, whether corporately in District Synods and Circuit meetings or individually (eg by District Chairs and Superintendents) derive their authority from the Conference.
33. The annual Conference, which consists of lay and ordained representatives, exercises oversight in various ways including: teaching the faith with authority and adjudicating on doctrinal matters; determining the practice and discipline of the Methodist Church and exercising pastoral discipline throughout the Connexion; deploying ministers and certain lay officers within the Methodist Church; and determining who are to be ordained presbyters and deacons.<sup>30</sup>
34. In *Episkopé and Episcopacy* (2000), the Methodist Conference adopted the principle that 'the Methodist Church is a connexional Church and all *episkope* should be exercised within this context'.<sup>31</sup> While oversight in the Methodist Church is exercised corporately through the Conference, oversight is also exercised by certain individuals on behalf of the Conference. Those individuals then preach, teach, make judgements, encourage, evangelise and offer pastoral care within the parameters set by the Conference. It is also individuals who must gain an overview of the life and work of the Church in order to be able to hold the Church on course in its daily decision-making at every level of the Church's life.
35. For this purpose, certain individuals (both lay and ordained) are appointed to a variety of offices in order to exercise particular kinds of oversight. In Circuits, ministers and local preachers build up the Church through preaching and teaching; ministers and circuit stewards provide leadership. The President of the Conference, District Chairs and Superintendents, who are necessarily presbyters, exercise a particular ministry of personal oversight as they preside over bodies of the Church. The Vice-President of the Conference (lay person or deacon) and the Secretary of the Conference (presbyter) in different ways exercise a personal and

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<sup>27</sup> JIC, 2008, 2011 and 2013 reports.

<sup>28</sup> The Methodist Conference, 1999, *Called to Love and Praise*, para 4.6.1.

<sup>29</sup> The Methodist Conference, 1999, *Called to Love and Praise*, para 4.6.1.

<sup>30</sup> JIC, 2008, *Embracing the Covenant*, p104.

<sup>31</sup> The Methodist Conference, 2000, *Episkope and Episcopacy*, Guideline 2.

representative form of oversight on behalf of the Conference. However, it is the office of the President of the Conference which most fully represents the oversight of the Conference.

36. The President of the Conference presides at the Conference Eucharist, presides at the Presbyteral Session of the Conference and ordains those recommended for ordination by the Conference. The President and the Vice-President of the Conference preside over sessions of the Conference and 'act as the representative embodiment of its authority' in their respective ways.<sup>32</sup> They exercise a collaborative ministry and play a significant part in the oversight of the Church, developing prophetic vision, offering encouragement and support and strengthening the bonds of the Connexion through their ministry of visitation.<sup>33</sup> The President has various specific powers, rights and duties including the right, if requested to do so, 'to visit any circuit, inquire into its affairs and to take any steps judged beneficial',<sup>34</sup> the duty to receive any application by a presbyter or deacon to resign<sup>35</sup> and the responsibility to act as the Secretary of the Conference or as a District Chair should there be a casual vacancy in either of these offices until they are filled.<sup>36</sup>

### **A Challenge for the Methodist Church: A President-bishop**

37. After taking account of the Methodist Church's consideration of possible alternative models,<sup>37</sup> the JIC proposed that the most appropriate way for the Methodist Church to receive the sign of the historic episcopate would be through the ordination of President-bishops.<sup>38</sup> That would mean that the presbyter inducted as President of the Conference would always also be ordained as a bishop on taking up an office that includes the ordination of presbyters and deacons. The proposals contained in this present report are based on this same idea of a President-bishop.
38. The appropriateness of a President-bishop rests on three theological premises:
- a) the Methodist Church constitutes a single unit of oversight (see paragraph 25);
  - b) the Conference exercises oversight over the Methodist Church;
  - c) the President of the Conference exercises a personal, connexional and representative form of oversight on behalf of Conference and presides over the ordination of ministers, thus ensuring continuity in the apostolic faith and mission. As noted above (paragraphs 35–36), no other officeholder in the Methodist Church represents the Conference in the same way or exercises such a broad range of responsibilities on its behalf.
39. As members of the Methodist Church and the Church of England have worked together to understand better the office and ministry of a bishop within the structures of oversight in our respective churches, a number of important principles regarding oversight and episcopacy have been identified from both Anglican and Methodist ecumenical documents and from consideration of expressions of episcopacy in other Methodist and Anglican churches.<sup>39</sup> A

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<sup>32</sup> Methodist Standing Order 110(1).

<sup>33</sup> Methodist Standing Orders 110(2) and 110(3).

<sup>34</sup> Methodist Standing Order 111(2).

<sup>35</sup> Methodist Standing Order 760.

<sup>36</sup> Clauses 31(h) and 42(c) of the *Deed of Union*.

<sup>37</sup> JIC, 2007, *Living God's Covenant*, paras 14-18 and 2008, *Embracing the Covenant*, p 86.

<sup>38</sup> JIC, 2008, *Embracing the Covenant*.

<sup>39</sup> See eg AMIC, 1996, §§49–85; AMICUM, 2014, §§50–121; also Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches, 1993, *The Porvoo Common Statement*, section IV, 'Episcopacy in the Service of the Apostolicity of the Church', available at [http://www.porvoocommunion.org/porvoo\\_communion/statement/the-statement-in-english/](http://www.porvoocommunion.org/porvoo_communion/statement/the-statement-in-english/).

summary is given below with brief comments on how these principles might relate to the current proposal of a President-bishop for the Methodist Church:

- a) oversight has always been necessary to the life of the Church and a key feature of that oversight is ensuring the continuity of the Church in the apostolic faith and mission. In the Methodist Church that continuity is located in the Conference. However, a key reason for ordaining bishops in the Church universal is to be a clearer and more visible sign of that continuity. This involves the focusing and representing of the continuity of the Church through the ministry of particular individuals chosen for that purpose.
- b) the ministry of oversight can provide a link between the local church and the universal church. Throughout the history of the church, bishops and others exercising a ministry of oversight have met to take counsel together. In the Anglican Communion this happens at a number of levels with bishops meeting together collegially at provincial level and, through the Lambeth Conference, at world level.
- c) oversight is and should be exercised communally, collegially and personally. The Methodist Church has perhaps emphasised the communal aspects of oversight at the expense of the personal for fear of giving too much power to individuals. However, it is nevertheless the case that the personal exercise of *episkope* in teaching, preaching, encouraging, making judgements, evangelising and offering pastoral care is present in the Methodist Church, albeit, in collaboration with others and within the parameters set by the Conference.
- d) where oversight is personal it should be exercised constitutionally. The constitutional exercise of oversight requires a clear articulation of the nature and extent of the authority given to individuals in relation to that exercised by bodies such as the Conference. This may be an area in which the Church of England can learn from the thinking and practice of the Methodist Church.
- e) where oversight is personal it should be exercised collaboratively and collegially wherever possible. Oversight, in one form or another, is exercised by both lay and ordained people at every level of the life of the Church. Where oversight is invested in ordained ministers it is to be exercised as collaboratively as possible and always for the building up of the Church. For example, Methodist presbyters exercise their particular responsibilities in conjunction with the appropriate circuit bodies and lay officers<sup>40</sup> and ministers stationed to the same Circuit are encouraged to meet together weekly 'in order to take counsel together respecting the affairs of the Circuit'.<sup>41</sup>
- f) oversight is more than governance, leadership and management. It includes the preservation of the integrity of the community in continuity with the apostolic faith and mission through the work of corporate bodies and individuals in teaching, preaching, encouraging, making judgements, evangelising and offering pastoral care.
- g) significant personal oversight is exercised by a range of people, both lay and ordained, at all levels of church life. In the Methodist Church the representative ministry of the Vice-President (who is usually a lay person and may be a deacon) is an important and visible expression of this principle at the connexional level.

40. The proposed office of President-bishop is a means of receiving the historic episcopate and exercising an episcopal ministry in a way that is compatible with Methodist polity and recognisable to the Church of England. Alongside the President-bishop, the office of Vice-

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<sup>40</sup> Methodist Standing Order 520.

<sup>41</sup> Methodist Standing Order 523(1).

President would continue to maintain the Methodist emphasis on collaboration between lay and ordained in the ministry of the people of God. (Although the office of Vice-President is open to lay people and deacons, the majority of Vice-Presidents have been lay.)

41. It is proposed that the Methodist Church would receive the historic episcopate by electing one of its presbyters in Full Connexion specifically to the office of President-bishop. Upon election, the President-bishop would be ordained to the office of bishop by bishops of partner churches whose orders are recognised by both churches. There is an ancient requirement, stemming from the Council of Nicaea,<sup>42</sup> that a new bishop is ordained by at least three bishops. It would be fitting for the first President-bishop to be ordained by at least three such bishops.
42. Consistent with the aims and objectives of establishing an interchangeable ministry, the President-bishop (or a past President who is a bishop) would then be required without exception to preside at all subsequent ordination services in the Methodist Church. This requirement would need to be included in Methodist Standing Orders.
43. The length of office held by a President-bishop would be subject to a decision of the Conference. For the time being, the office of President-bishop will continue to be an annual appointment as it currently is for a President. However, after leaving office, a President-bishop would continue to exercise a permanent episcopal ministry in the Methodist Church in conjunction with serving on the stations or in some other appointment. In this way, a President-bishop as such will continue in a permanent relationship with the Conference, exercising a permanent episcopal ministry. The Methodist Church should seek to develop and formalise in its Standing Orders the ways in which President-bishops may continue to exercise an episcopal ministry. This episcopal ministry would include representing the President-bishop from time to time on those occasions where Methodist polity specifies that the President shall preside. Obviously, this may include presiding at ordination services.
44. It is proposed that the Methodist Church appoint a President-bishop in the following way.
  - (i) The current process of nominating and electing presbyters to the office of President of the Conference could be replaced by a method of nomination and election to the office of President-bishop which will take account of the fact that these will continue to exercise an episcopal ministry beyond the specified period in office.
  - (ii) In year 1, following election to that office, at the Conference, the President-bishop will be ordained to the episcopate by at least three bishops in the historic episcopate at an appropriate venue using an authorised Methodist liturgy prepared in consultation with ecumenical partners. The Secretary and Vice-President of the Conference will participate in the ordination in a way equivalent to their present roles at an ordination service.
  - (iii) In year 1, the President-bishop will preside at the ordination of all those probationer presbyters and deacons whom the Conference accepts to be received into Full Connexion and ordained.
  - (iv) From year 2, the President-bishop, assisted by at least two bishops recognised by both churches within the historic episcopate, will preside at the ordination of his or her successor elected by the Conference. In year 3, the President-bishop, the ex-President who has been ordained to the episcopate and one or more bishops from partner churches within the historic episcopate, will preside. In subsequent years, those who have previously been ordained to the episcopate will participate in the ordination of a

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<sup>42</sup> Canon 4 of the Canons of the Council of Nicaea, 325.

President-bishop and preside at the ordination of probationer presbyters and deacons at the invitation of the President-bishop.

- (v) From an early stage, the practice should be established of reciprocal invitations between the Methodist Church and the Church of England for participation in their services of ordination to the episcopate. Such participation is a powerful sign of our two churches sharing together in the historic episcopate and of their relationship of communion with one another.
- (vi) Past Presidents of the Conference, whether ordained to the episcopate or not, and past Vice-Presidents will continue to participate by invitation in other forms of connexional oversight such as the chairing of connexional committees and working groups.
- (vii) The President-bishop, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference will continue to collaborate in their respective roles as specified in Standing Orders.
- (viii) Those ordained to the episcopate remain members of the body of past Presidents and Vice Presidents. Their role would be to focus and represent the historic continuity of the Church within, beyond and for the Methodist Church, but not to exercise a distinct corporate oversight function.

### 3. 'TO WELCOME ALL PRESBYTERS / PRIESTS'

45. The previous chapter set out a way forward by which our two churches can fulfil the first of the two additional commitments it is proposed that they make, along with the declaration of being in communion as churches:
- a) to share the ministry of the historic episcopate as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church of God.

In this chapter, the focus shifts to the second of the two commitments, inseparable from the first and from the declaration of being in communion:

- b) to welcome all presbyters / priests serving in either church as eligible to serve in both churches.

It begins by affirming on the basis of established ecumenical agreements that although there is a difference in characteristic terms used by our two churches – presbyter and priest – there is a strong common understanding of this ministry. It then outlines some of the particular issues that are raised for our churches by this second commitment, and outlines a way forward to enable the interchangeability of presbyteral ministries between our churches in the context of an ecclesial relationship of communion in which we share the ministry of the historic episcopate.

#### Convergence behind the different language

46. Theological work over 50 years on the nature and role of the ordained ministry has shown a convergence in understanding between the Church of England and the Methodist Church (and indeed other ecumenical partners), and has supported the two churches in moving towards visible unity. Alongside that convergence between our churches, differences of emphasis and approach remain within our churches, and these need to be borne in mind when seeking to evaluate the extent of our agreement.
47. The *Common Statement* supporting the 2003 Covenant was resting on firm foundations established over the past half-century when it concluded that: 'The Church of England's understanding of ministerial priesthood is thus of a pastoral, preaching, teaching, and sacramental ministry ... A priest in the Church of England is a person called and ordained to the same ministry of word and sacrament as is exercised by ministers in Methodism'.<sup>43</sup>
48. Within each of our churches there are differences of theological understanding about, for example, the sacramental character conferred by ordination and different orders of ministry. Contrasting approaches to the practice of lay presidency at the eucharist also raise some questions for continuing discussion, addressed in the work of the JIC and given careful consideration as part of the process of preparing the current report.<sup>44</sup> Neither of these matters, however, detracts from the substantial convergence on the theology of presbyteral ministry described in this section.
49. The doctrinal standards of the two churches present their theological understanding of the presbyterate in somewhat different terms.<sup>45</sup> This was an area that received significant

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<sup>43</sup> 2001, *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Common Statement*, para 156.

<sup>44</sup> JIC, 2005, *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, chapter 6, 'Presiding at the Eucharist', pp 50–89.

<sup>45</sup> The doctrinal standards of the two churches are described briefly in *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, §§103–107. Anglicans and Methodists ground their belief and teaching on the Holy Scriptures and the ecumenical creeds. 'Both churches also have secondary, historic formularies'



attention in the *Common Statement* underpinning the signing of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant in 2003. It emphasised that our churches share a common intention: 'in ordination the intention of both our churches is to ordain to the presbyterate of the whole Church of Christ' (Anglican-Methodist Covenant, §148). A shared 'intention' in setting apart certain individuals 'for the office and work of a presbyter' provides a helpful starting point for theological dialogue in understanding the nature of this office and work.<sup>46</sup> However, while both churches use the term 'presbyter' for this ministry, in the Church of England, presbyters are more usually called priests. Does this difference of language reflect an underlying difference in theology?

50. The *Common Statement* sought to express agreement on the priesthood of the ordained ministry on the grounds that a representative (presbyteral) ministry is related both to the priesthood of Christ and to the priesthood of baptized believers, and they clearly cannot be separated without dividing Christ and his Body, the Church (§149). It refers to documents from the Church of England that relate the use of the term 'priest' for presbyters both to the priesthood of Christ and to the common or corporate priesthood of the whole Church 'in a particular way' (§152). While the Methodist Church's *Deed of Union* (1932) refers to 'the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers', the 1960 Conference Statement on ordination says this:

... the doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers' is that we share, as believers, in the priesthood of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ ... the doctrine does not mean that every Christian has the right to exercise every function and administer both sacraments.<sup>47</sup>

51. Each church can then give the other substantial assurance on particular points of concern for the other regarding the theology of the presbyterate. In avoiding the term 'priests' for presbyters, the Methodist Church is not implying the functional equivalence of all Christians or diminishing its teaching about the high responsibilities that pertain to presbyteral ministry with what the Deed of Union describes as its 'principal and directing part in these great duties' [of stewarding and shepherding the flock].<sup>48</sup> In using the term 'priests' for presbyters, the Church of England is not implying that their ministry is separate and independent from the priesthood which is common to all the Lord's people.
52. Other ecumenical dialogues illustrate a similar convergence on this matter. The *Common Statement's* treatment of 'The Presbyterate' (§§148-56) drew on existing ecumenical agreements to which the Church of England was committed. These included not only those arising from dialogue with Protestant churches (such as the *Reuilly Common Statement*, cited at §152), but also texts on ordained ministry from the first phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, affirmed by the General Synod as 'consonant in substance with the faith of the Church of England'. Similarly, *Synthesis Together in Holiness: 40 years of Methodist and Roman Catholic Dialogue* (2010) notes that 'despite obvious outward differences, Methodists and Catholics have a large measure of common understanding on ministry'; they 'affirm together the priesthood of the whole Church', recognising that 'within

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(§103). 'Subordinate to these authorities are various recent statements of a doctrinal nature that have been endorsed in various ways in the Church of England' (§107). In the Methodist Church, 'In addition to the doctrinal clause of the Deed of Union, there are other statements of a doctrinal nature: the *Catechism* of 1986 and the reports on faith and order authorised by the Conference....' (§108).

<sup>46</sup> Even so, a shared 'intention' in celebrating the sacraments of the Church quickly unravels if, in the course of dialogue, it transpires that the separated churches have incompatible views of what they think is happening. On the other hand, declaring a shared intention suggests a definite commitment to articulating a common understanding and a consequential willingness to receive fresh theological insights from one another.

<sup>47</sup> The Minutes of Conference 1960, p 241.

<sup>48</sup> Clause 4 of the *Deed of Union*.

the apostolic service of the whole community there has been, from the beginning, a ministry uniquely called and empowered to build up the body of Christ in love'.<sup>49</sup>

53. Since the *Common Statement* was published (2001), the Anglican understanding of priesthood has continued to be a subject for careful consideration in ecumenical dialogue, perhaps most notably in the *Cyprus Statement* of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (2006). This text strongly affirms the relationship of priesthood to the church community on the one hand and to the 'priestly mission' of Christ on the other, in both Anglican and Orthodox traditions:

It is not an authority or a power above the community, nor a function or office parallel to or outside it.... Christian priesthood involves participation in Christ's own priestly mission. It is the personal gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly-ordained that enables this participation.... It is a permanent order of service only in union with the Church and by its discerning authority.<sup>50</sup>

The priesthood of the ordained is not therefore the property 'of a particular order or class of persons', but rather something that, as the *Cyprus Statement* says, 'belongs to the eucharistic community': 'The people of God, gathered together in eucharistic communion, constitutes the basis for ordained priestly ministry.'<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Synthesis*, 114 and 116.

<sup>50</sup> International Commission for Anglican – Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD), 2006, *The Church of the Triune God: The Cyprus Statement*, VI.20–22, available at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/103818/The-Church-of-the-Triune-God.pdf>. A key earlier ecumenical text for Anglicans in this area is the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) I Statement from 1973, 'Ministry and Ordination', available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19730901\\_ministry-ordination\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19730901_ministry-ordination_en.html).

<sup>51</sup> ICAOTD, *Church of the Triune God*, VI.17.

## A Challenge for the Church of England: 'Welcoming All Presbyters / Priests'

54. Episcopal ordination is a canonical requirement for serving as an ordained minister in the Church of England. Presbyters who have not been ordained by a bishop recognised as sharing in the historic episcopate are not at present eligible to serve in the Church of England. The current proposals, however, hinge on each church welcoming *all* presbyters / priests serving in the other church as eligible to serve, including in the case of the Church of England those Methodist presbyters in full connexion when the new relationship begins and therefore ordained prior to the Methodist Church's reception of the historic episcopate. How can this be compatible with Anglican theology and polity? This second section of the chapter explores some of the relevant background and explains how what is being proposed provides a context for 'a fresh creative act of reconciliation which acknowledges the manifold yet unified activity of the Holy Spirit throughout the ages' in our two churches.<sup>52</sup>
55. It was already recognised at the 1920 Lambeth Conference that wherever non-episcopal churches are ready to respond with Anglican churches to God's call to visible unity, those Anglican churches 'might be faced with the necessity of providing for the contingency that many ministers who at the time of the union were working in the non-episcopal Communion, would remain after the union without episcopal ordination.'<sup>53</sup> The desire of both our churches to grow in visible unity today confronts us with a comparable situation. Establishing a new relationship of communion between our churches must mean a new relationship of all ordained ministers in each church with the other church – both those currently serving and those ordained in the future.
56. Nearly 80 years later, the 1998 Lambeth Conference summarised the rich tradition of Anglican ecumenism in the following terms (resolution IV.1):
- This Conference: a. reaffirms the Anglican commitment to the full, visible unity of the Church as the goal of the Ecumenical Movement; b. encourages the further explication of the characteristics which belong to the full, visible unity of the Church (described variously as the goal, the marks, or the portrait of visible unity); and c. recognises that the process of moving towards full, visible unity may entail temporary anomalies, and believes that some anomalies may be bearable when there is an agreed goal of visible unity, but that there should always be an impetus towards their resolution and, thus, towards the removal of the principal anomaly of disunity.
57. This use of the term 'anomaly' has become familiar in Anglican ecumenism, but it is easy for it to be misheard and indeed misused, which is why the wording of the 1998 resolution as a whole is important. Whilst it would be inappropriate to use the term 'anomaly' regarding anyone's ordination, it has become a way of referring to temporary situations in the life of the church that stand in some degree of tension with abiding ecclesiological principles. All our churches in fact live with anomalies of this kind, with the principal, distorting anomaly that lies at the root of so many others being our disunity. Tangible steps to overcome this primary anomaly will inevitably tend to generate secondary, limited anomalies as churches take concrete steps to overcome that disunity and draw closer to one another and closer to Christ. Such limited anomalies are willingly 'borne' or carried by those churches as part of their shared journey towards unity.
58. This is not at all a matter of an end justifying certain means. Rather the hope of a growing visible unity before the return of Christ gives a rationale for accepting temporary periods of

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52 International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue Commission, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 1991, paragraph 94; text available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/meth-council-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_1991\\_apostolic-tradition\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/meth-council-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_1991_apostolic-tradition_en.html).

<sup>53</sup> Text in Randall Davidson, ed., *The Six Lambeth Conferences 1867–1920* (London: SPCK, 1920), 'Lambeth Conference, 1920', pp 142–43.

reorientation along the way, accepting the necessarily anomalous experience which that will involve. The journey towards the unity of the church we confess in the creed can never be a direct or straightforward one for churches that have developed and grown in separation from one another. There may therefore be a need for churches moving deeper into unity with one another to be ready to endure certain temporary anomalies in their arrangements as part of the journey towards unity, without abandoning the norms with regard to which anomalies can be identified. In this case, accepting that the journey involves bearing a particular anomaly on the part of the Church of England affirms that there is no intention to undermine or dilute the Church of England's commitment to the Anglican norm, shared with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, of episcopal ordination. What is proposed serves to maintain the Church of England's commitment to the ordering of its ordained ministry, ordained in the historic episcopate.

59. What is described in Anglican ecumenism as bearing an anomaly may also be understood as an application of the gift of the Spirit by which the church is called to live, namely her mission to further the unity which Christ wills. This may be said to allow her to set aside the strict application of its laws for especially compelling reasons better to serve God's purposes.<sup>54</sup> Among these purposes is that unity of Christians which Christ wills. When such flexibility is applied, the underlying principle remains intact but a greater purpose is made possible. This has some similarities to the practice known to the Eastern Churches as *oikonomia*, though it differs in important respects. It cannot be used to change matters of dogma, nor can it be invoked to create what does not exist, and it requires some recognition of what is already present and has been accomplished. All of this parallels, without being precisely the same as, the concept of 'anomaly' as this has evolved in Anglican ecumenical theology, and thereby suggests that the thinking outlined in this section is one that other churches may also be able to recognise as a faithful response to the prayer of Christ that we should be one, that the world may believe.
60. Within this long-standing framework of international Anglican ecumenism, the question for the Church of England might be phrased in the following terms: can one crucial element of the proposals in this report – welcoming all Methodist presbyters as eligible to serve, including those not episcopally ordained, at the point where the Church of England and the Methodist Church enter into a new relationship of communion with one another as churches – be properly described as an anomaly that can be borne together on this journey towards unity, rather than the giving up of a long-standing principle? The situation envisaged would certainly meet the two basic, general criteria set out in the 1998 Lambeth resolution: the anomaly would be temporary only, and the primary motivation for carrying it for a limited period would be the unity for which Christ prayed. Two other criteria, however, are also relevant here. The first is the recognition of what is already present, and the second is the effect of becoming an episcopally ordered church.
61. First, then, the Church of England *already recognises* the ordained ministries of the Methodist Church and its means of oversight, which include the provision made for the ordination of its presbyters. This is made abundantly clear in the affirmations of the 2003 Covenant:
- 1) We affirm one another's churches as true churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and as truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.
  - 2) We affirm that in both our churches the word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are duly administered and celebrated.
  - 3) We affirm that both our churches confess in word and life the apostolic faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the ecumenical Creeds.

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<sup>54</sup> See Will Adam, *Legal Flexibility and the Mission of the Church: Dispensation and Economy in Ecclesiastical Law* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

- 4) We affirm that one another's ordained and lay ministries are given by God as instruments of God's grace, to build up the people of God in faith, hope and love, for the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care and to share in God's mission in the world.
  - 5) We affirm that one another's ordained ministries possess both the inward call of the Holy Spirit and Christ's commission given through the Church.
  - 6) We affirm that both our churches embody the conciliar, connexional nature of the Church and that communal, collegial and personal oversight (*episkope*) is exercised within them in various forms.
  - 7) We affirm that there already exists a basis for agreement on the principles of episcopal oversight as a visible sign and instrument of the communion of the Church in time and space.
62. It has become an accepted part of the Church of England's theology and practice that underpinning any recognition of ministers from another church is a recognition of that other church, as part of the one church of God – hence the importance of the first of the Covenant affirmations. This principle underpins the 2014 document from the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission, *Recognition by the Church of England of Orders Conferred in Other Churches* (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/faith-and-order-commission.aspx>). Formal recognition by the Church of England of churches outside the Anglican Communion is given neither automatically nor indeed frequently. Because ordained ministry is integral to the life of the church, such mutual recognition as churches is inseparable from mutual recognition of ministries, as the affirmations of the Covenant that follow the first make clear.
63. Nor is the Church of England doing something novel or unwarranted in terms of Anglican tradition by affirming that the ordained and lay ministries of a non-episcopal church such as the Methodist Church 'are given by God as instruments of God's grace.' While a variety of ecclesiological views regarding episcopacy was expressed in Anglicanism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one that has a reasonable claim to continuing respect would be that of Richard Hooker. Hooker is very clear that the power to ordain is 'ordinarily' reserved to bishops, but he also allows that there can also be an 'extraordinary kind of vocation', where
- the exigence of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the church, which otherwise we would willingly keep; where the church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give, place. And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination.<sup>55</sup>
- Although it is not the language he uses, it might be said that Hooker considers non-episcopal ordination as an anomaly, certainly, but as one that has been and can be carried on its journey through history by the church of God, because non-episcopal ordinations may be recognised in appropriate circumstances as 'effectual'.
64. Apostolicity affirms the continuity with the apostles of the Church's faith and life, its sacraments, ministry, oversight, and mission.<sup>56</sup> To recognise the apostolicity of another church – as the Church of England and the Methodist Church have done in the first of the Covenant affirmations – entails a recognition of its ministry as also apostolic, in continuity with the apostles. While the Church of England places a specific value on the historic episcopate as a sign of apostolic continuity, the British Methodist Church has sustained a

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* VII.xiv,11, cited in Norman Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyterian: The Anglican Attitude to Episcopacy, Presbyterianism and Papacy since the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp 70-71.

<sup>56</sup> Porvoo Common Statement, §§36–40.

commitment to expressing its apostolic continuity as a church through the distinctive role of the Conference (see eg paragraphs 22 and 25 in the previous chapter). All ministers are ordained by the President of the Conference on behalf of the whole Conference or by a presbyter to whom the President has deputed this responsibility. They are also received into Full Connexion, whereby they enter into a covenant relationship with the Conference. In this relationship they accept a common discipline of stationing and collegially exercise pastoral responsibility for the Church on behalf of the Conference in the contexts to which they are sent ‘working in collaboration with others, in the courts of the church and individually, who bear proper responsibilities in those situations’.<sup>57</sup> It is the Conference that recommends ministers for ordination and stations them to a particular Methodist circuit. The pervasive idea of ‘connexion’ in Methodist ecclesiology is relevant here: every part bound to every other part within the one church. Hence the observation in the recent report from the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission, that ‘The orderly transmission of ordained ministry takes place in Methodism under the discipline of the Conference, while for Anglicans, “the historic episcopate” plays a key role.’<sup>58</sup>

65. The second critical point to be considered in evaluating this aspect of the proposals on the part of the Church of England is the *effect of the Methodist Church becoming an episcopally ordered church*, with which the Church of England is in communion. The anomaly here is not in the first place that an Anglican church accepts the ministry of presbyters not ordained episcopally, but that a church participating in the historic episcopate, with which an Anglican church may therefore come to be in communion, includes ministers who have not been ordained episcopally. That anomaly is, however, intrinsic to the process of any non-episcopal church responding to Anglicanism’s distinctive call to Christian unity, and any Anglicans who would like to avoid it altogether must consider whether they truly desire the unity of non-episcopal churches with their own. As articulated in the historic ‘Appeal to all Christian People’ of the 1920 Lambeth Conference, an essential strand of Anglicanism’s contribution to the ecumenical movement has been to commend to non-episcopal churches the historic episcopate and the ‘well-being’ for the church that they believe flows from it. The more *deeply* Anglicans value the historic episcopate, therefore, the more greatly they should rejoice when a non-episcopal church is ready to consider receiving it with them, and the more *highly* they should value the effect on that church of becoming episcopally ordered.
66. Those who believe that the ministry of the historic episcopate is given by God for the flourishing and well-being of the church will expect the fruits of this ministry to grow throughout the life of the churches where it is exercised, including its ordained ministers. Under the proposals of this report, each church would receive presbyters / priests from the other, whenever they had been ordained, as those exercising their ministry in a church with which their church is in communion, under the authority of a bishop with whom their bishops are in communion. These relational, ecclesial bonds are crucial in limiting the anomaly and making it one that can be borne on the shared journey towards unity without damage to ecclesial norms. Such bonds need to find appropriate liturgical and sacramental expression in the way that a new relationship between our churches is inaugurated and, following that, how each church welcome presbyters / priests from the other to contribute to its ministry. Some brief comments on this area are included in chapter 4 below (paragraphs 93–94).
67. For those who share such an understanding of the historic episcopate as a gift for the flourishing of the church, it is especially important to see the action of a church in receiving this ministry as something that affects the whole life of that church, as all in the church come into relationship with the bishop, who is now established in relationship with others who share the historic episcopate, in the present and the past. This is therefore something that

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<sup>57</sup> Standing Order 740

<sup>58</sup> Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM), 2014, *Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches* (London: Anglican Consultative Council), p 51.

affects all clergy, whenever they were ordained: they now exercise their ministry in a relationship of ecclesial communion – including sacramental communion – with the bishop, or, as Methodism might express it, full connexion. Church of England bishops, in welcoming all Methodist presbyters as eligible to serve under their authority, would do so on the basis of recognising them as the presbyters of another bishop, who also shares in the historic episcopate and with whom they are in communion.

68. The relationship between apostolicity and the historic episcopate should also be mentioned in this context. Where two churches agree, as is proposed here, ‘to share the ministry of the historic episcopate as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church of God’, mutual affirmation of one another as apostolic churches and of one another’s ministries as in continuity with the apostles is strengthened and enriched. Each church can consider the other’s presbyters / priests as exercising their ministry in the context of eucharistic communion with a bishop in the historic episcopate, who is in communion with their bishops. Their ministry is shaped and marked by such episcopal ministry as a sign of the apostolicity of the Church of God. In ecumenical dialogues, Anglicans have emphasised the weight that rests on mutual recognition and collegiality between bishops in affirming and sustaining the reality of communion between their churches.<sup>59</sup>
69. These two factors – recognition of the fruitfulness of ministries already being exercised, and the effect of a church becoming ordered in the historic episcopate – have been crucial for occasions in the past when Anglican churches have chosen to bear temporary anomalies of this kind for the sake of growing into deeper unity with other churches.<sup>60</sup> Two of the most important precedents concern the formation of the Church of South India (CSI) in 1947 and then of the Church of North India (CNI) in 1970 from both Anglican and non-episcopal churches. In the case of the CSI, it was decided to accept the orders of all those ministering in the participant churches at the point of the new united church coming into existence, with certain limitations put in place in terms of where ministers would actually serve. In the case of the CNI, the issue was handled somewhat differently. There was an inaugural service involving mutual laying on of hands, in which bishops prayed for ordained ministers from non-episcopal churches. The Act of Unification was considered thereafter as equivalent to episcopal ordination for the purposes of holding office in the Church of England.
70. A similar approach to that of the formation of the CNI was integral to the Anglican – Methodist scheme that foundered in the General Synod in 1972. It became one of the most debated and indeed distrusted aspects of it, and the JIC did not regard this as a viable path to seek to follow again. Moreover, it is not an approach that has commended itself to subsequent effective initiatives in church unity involving Anglicans.
71. The formation of what has come to be called the Porvoo Communion of Churches offers the most direct precedent for the Church of England for what is proposed in this report. The heart of the agreement, accepted by the Church of England synodically and by the Nordic and Baltic Churches, is to be found in its understanding of episcopacy in the service of the apostolicity of the Churches,<sup>61</sup> separately endorsed in the House of Bishops’ Occasional Paper, *Apostolicity and Succession*, which clarifies the relation between the apostolicity and continuity of the Church and its sign in the historical succession of bishops.<sup>62</sup> Although all the Lutheran churches concerned had at the time of the agreement bishops who ordained their pastors, it

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<sup>59</sup> ICAOTD, 2006, *Church of the Triune God*, Section V, ‘*Episcopate, Episcopos and Primacy*’; also ARCIC I, 1973, ‘*Ministry and Ordination*’, §16.

<sup>60</sup> For an overview of relevant developments, see Will Adam, 2015, ‘*Squaring the Circle: Anglicans and the Recognition of Holy Orders*’, *One in Christ* vol 49 (2), pp 254–269.

<sup>61</sup> Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches, *Together in Mission and Ministry: The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe* (Church House Publishing: London, 1993), pp 22–23.

<sup>62</sup> House of Bishops, *Apostolicity and Succession*, 1994, GS Misc 432.

was accepted that the historic succession of bishops had not been maintained in all cases. Indeed, the office of bishop in historic succession had only been introduced into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia in 1920 (which had previously been led by 'General Superintendents') and into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania in 1976. Moreover, in Latvia and Estonia, those elected to the office of bishop from the late 1930s to the late 1960s were unable to receive consecration as bishops for political reasons.<sup>63</sup> While it was agreed that pastors who had been ordained by those not holding episcopal office would not be eligible to serve in Anglican churches within the Porvoo Communion, no restrictions applied in relation to breaks in the succession of bishops, or where ordaining bishops had been elected but not consecrated. Lutheran churches joining the Communion, however, committed themselves to ensuring that all future ordinations of bishops would include laying on of hands from bishops recognised by all churches in the Porvoo Communion as being in historic succession.

72. In recognizing the orders of Lutheran ministers in cases where it was not clear that the minister of ordination shared in the historic episcopate, without requiring conditional ordination or some kind of analogous action, the Church of England was doing something it had not done before, and following the precedent of the CSI rather than the CNI. It accepted that temporary anomalies here could be borne as part of the journey towards fuller unity in Christ. The legal basis for this recognition lay in the authority of the General Synod and of the Archbishops.
  
73. While other parallels could be reviewed (not least the Anglican – Lutheran agreements in the USA and Canada), the closest precedent from the Anglican Communion for the current proposals is the situation in Ireland, where the Church of Ireland is now in communion with the Methodist Church with interchangeability of presbyteral ministries, including Methodist presbyters ordained prior to the Methodist Church's reception of the historic episcopate. While the proposals under consideration would break new ground for the Church of England, they would not constitute an innovation within the Anglican Communion.<sup>64</sup> The specific kind of limited, temporary anomaly being considered in this section has been borne on the journey towards unity by other churches within the Communion, with which the Church of England remains in communion, in prayerful expectation of the work of the Holy Spirit to supply whatever may be lacking in our churches. As expressed by an Anglican commentator on the agreement in Ireland, 'The period of anomaly is not mere pragmatism – it is a moment of grace.'<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Together in Mission and Ministry*, pp 109–23.

<sup>64</sup> This judgment is confirmed by the positive response to the draft version of this report received from the Inter Anglican Standing Committee on Unity, Faith and Order.

<sup>65</sup> Blog post 13 May 2014 on *Catholicity and Covenant – Catholic Anglican Ressourcement – Radical Orthodoxy*, available at <http://catholicityandcovenant.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/cofi-methodist-interchangeability-ii.html>.



#### 4. FROM COVENANT TO COMMUNION

74. The final chapter of this report addresses a number of areas in terms of tasks that potentially lie ahead for our churches in moving from covenant to communion. First, it surveys the legislation that might be required in each church in order to bring particular changes into effect. Second, it starts to identify questions that, while not critical for the early stages in that timetable, ought to begin to be addressed well before full implementation. Third, it suggests a number of recommendations for adoption by our churches at the point of full implementation. Finally, it sets out a provisional timetable for the acceptance of the proposals made in the preceding chapters and offers some brief commentary on that.

##### Outline of legislation for the Church of England

75. Significant legal changes would be needed in order for presbyters ordained in the Methodist Church prior to the introduction of the historic episcopate to become eligible to exercise ordained ministry in the Church of England. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 and the Ordinal annexed to it require episcopal ordination of every person 'admitted to any parsonage, vicarage, benefice or other ecclesiastical promotion or dignity whatsoever...' This requirement has been consistently maintained by the Church of England and other Anglican churches since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
76. The immediate background to the 1662 Act of Uniformity was the national trauma caused by the English Civil Wars and the upheaval in parishes caused by the Commonwealth. As its title suggests, the Act of Uniformity, modelled on earlier Acts of Uniformity enacted in 1549, 1552 and 1559, was intended to establish ecclesiastical and liturgical discipline. Since then it has been a means by which the unity of the Church of England has been preserved amidst theological diversity. Nevertheless, it is proposed that the Church of England, in response to the Methodist Church receiving the historic episcopate, introduce legislation that would in effect dispense Methodist presbyters for a limited period from the requirement to have received episcopal ordination in order to serve by invitation in the Church of England.
77. In terms of canon law in the Church of England, the General Synod would be asked to introduce the following provisions in order to implement the framework outlined in this report:
- (a) a declaration or agreement establishing a relationship of communion between the Church of England and the Methodist Church (such as was used to initiate the Porvoo Communion of Churches) alongside the making of the two new commitments from both churches to be inaugurated upon the Methodist Church receiving the historic episcopate by the means proposed herein;
  - (b) a Measure containing the legislation to enable that relationship of communion and its accompanying commitments to be brought into effect.

The proposed Measure would need to cover (at least) two areas. First, it would permit presbyters in Full Connexion with the Methodist Conference at the time at which the relationship of communion is established and all presbyters subsequently ordained in the Methodist Church to be eligible to serve in the Church of England. Second, the Measure would therefore also need to make provision enabling bishops of the Church of England to participate in the consecration of a President-bishop on the first occasion, as the relationship of communion is established.

78. The most effective way to achieve this outcome would be for the Measure to include a deeming provision under which presbyters ordained in the Methodist Church would be treated for all legal purposes on the same basis as clerks in holy orders of the Church of England. There is a partial precedent for this in the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967, Section 1, which makes provision under which the Archbishop can grant permission to officiate in his province to an 'overseas clergyman', ie a priest or deacon ordained by a bishop of a Church outside the British Isles which is in communion with the Church of England. Where a permission is granted under the section, the priest or deacon will possess 'all such rights and advantages and be subject to all such duties and liabilities as he would have possessed and been subject to if he had been ordained by the bishop of a diocese in the province of Canterbury or York'. Such an approach would not require amendment of the 1662 Act itself, which would remain unamended and in force, or of other related Canons. It would however require an amending canon to overcome provisions in the Canons which duplicate the provisions in the 1662 Act and which re-enact provisions which were formerly contained in the Act.
79. Second, ecclesiastical law currently permits bishops of the Church of England to lay on hands at ordinations or consecrations in other churches only where 'that Church is an episcopal Church with which the Church of England has established intercommunion' (Canon B 43.5). This would not apply in the case of the first ordination of a President-bishop. So far as the ecclesiastical law is concerned, the Methodist Church would only become an 'episcopal church' after receiving the historic episcopate and the President-bishop commencing an episcopal ministry. Moreover, it is intended that such an ordination would itself be an action that would inaugurate the relationship of being in communion (equivalent to 'intercommunion' in the language of Canon B 43).
80. Finally, it should be emphasised that the interchangeability of presbyters / priests would be at the invitation of the appropriate authority. In the case of Church of England parishes, incumbents, patrons, bishops and parish representatives as applicable have sufficient existing powers to regulate such invitations, for instance under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986.
81. Legislation of the kind envisaged by the proposals in this report would constitute Article 7 business on the basis that it was 'provision touching doctrinal formulae or the services or ceremonies of the Church of England or the administration of the Sacraments or sacred rites thereof'.<sup>66</sup> It would also be Article 8 business as it would provide for 'a permanent and substantial change of relationship between the Church of England and another Christian body being a body a substantial number of whose members reside in Great Britain'.<sup>67</sup> Hence time for Article 7 references to the Convocations, House of Laity and House of Bishops, and for an Article 8 reference to the Dioceses, have been built into the indicative timetable. Some thought would need to be given in due course to the issue of special majorities which the General Synod can require under Article 8(1B).

### **Outline of legislation for the Methodist Church**

82. Receiving the historic episcopate in the Methodist Church would require some changes to the doctrinal standards in clause 4 of the Deed of Union. In 1981 the Faith and Order Committee concluded that the doctrinal standards would not be violated by acceptance of the historic episcopate, and a further report, adopted by the Conference in 1982, set out the reasoning

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<sup>66</sup> See Article 7(1) of the Constitution of the General Synod, set out in Schedule 2 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969.

<sup>67</sup> See Article 8(1) of the Constitution of the General Synod.

behind that conclusion.<sup>68</sup> However, amendments to clause 4 confirmed in 2012 now specifically refer to presbyters and deacons (in place of the more general 'ministers'), making it necessary that there should also be reference to bishops. In that context the Church's understanding of the office must also be clarified for the reassurance of both the Methodist people and ecumenical partners.

83. Amendments to other clauses in the Deed of Union and to Standing Orders will also be necessary. Amendments to clause 4 should however be kept to a minimum and be restricted to matters which are intended to be invariable. Any changes to clause 4 involve special legislation that requires a 75% majority at the Conference followed by widespread consultation throughout the Connexion and confirmation by a 75% majority at the Conference two years later. Other changes to the Deed (and any changes to Standing Orders which the Conference might deem to be sufficiently significant) require a similar majority in two successive Conferences with intervening consultation.

### **Areas to be addressed between adoption and implementation**

84. If this report receives a positive response from the churches, a number of subjects might be identified where it could be advisable to commission some joint further work by relevant church bodies or by specially established groups, for completion before full implementation of the proposals. These would include: practical arrangements for interchangeability; sharing in oversight; and liturgy to express changed relationships.
85. On the first, while it is not possible to anticipate every scenario, there are at least two ways in which interchangeability might become a reality. The first is for a presbyter / priest holding an appointment in the church in which they were ordained also to be given permission to exercise presbyteral ministry in the other church, while continuing to hold their current appointment. The second is for a presbyter / priest holding an appointment in the church in which they were ordained to lay that down and take up an appointment to serve as a presbyter / priest in the other church.
86. In the first scenario, a priest / presbyter may assist in their local Circuit or parish, thus exercising ministry in both churches at the same time. This is likely to foster relationships of fellowship not only between presbyters but also between the congregations that they serve, and to act as a catalyst, perhaps, for energising local mission.
87. With regard to the second scenario, legislation along the lines set out above should provide a suitable framework for this to happen in the case of Methodist presbyters taking up full-time appointments in the Church of England. The Methodist Church is encouraged to consider making additional provision as a result of being in communion with the Church of England to facilitate the stationing of Anglican clergy as itinerant ministers.
88. Careful thought will be needed about a range of issues in seeking to make these various possibilities a reality. For instance, presbyters / priests from one church will be placing themselves under the discipline and authority of the other for the ministry they exercise there. At the same time, they will continue to be subject to the discipline and authority of the church which ordained them, and whose presbyter / priest they will still be. Practical matters regarding 'terms and conditions' will also need to be reviewed in the case of the second scenario here.
89. All presbyters / priests serving in one church who seek to serve in the other will clearly require appropriate induction, continuing training, oversight and support. There is also a potential

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<sup>68</sup> *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order vol. 1*, pp181ff.

opportunity to encourage all presbyters / priests to gain a better understanding of one another's ministries in our two churches, and to become more aware of the possibilities for serving in and with both churches.

90. Suitable ways of expressing and enabling ecclesial collegiality and sharing in oversight will need to be identified in due course in order for the developments advocated here to take root in the life of our churches. This is a second area to which it is recommended that attention be given before full implementation of the proposals. Episcopates will continue to be separate in that they will serve churches that are institutionally distinct, but as those churches become more deeply committed to being in communion through the integrated sharing and exchange of ministers, so their episcopates will need to meet and to share in oversight together. Thus, the Church of England has regular meetings of bishops with the bishops of the Old Catholic Church and of the Porvoo Communion of Churches, and the Methodist Church has regular consultations with the bishops of the United Methodist Church in the USA and several European countries. Such meetings are consultative and therefore do not have the authority to take decisions that would be binding on participants, but they are important in discerning the shared mission of the churches concerned and considering how churches can together respond to the challenges they face.
91. A commitment to sharing in oversight is not all that is needed if the new relationship between our churches proposed in this report is to flourish, but it is a necessary condition. The experience of the Anglican churches in North America since entering into communion with Lutheran churches which share the same territory bears this out. If the exchange of ministries is to become something that truly contributes to the vitality of the Church in mission, then it needs the support of those entrusted with ministries of oversight at every level, and their willingness to communicate and cooperate with one another. Challenges will emerge that need patience and determination if they are to be tackled, and each church will need the help of the other to do that.
92. Transforming the dynamics of mission in England was mentioned earlier (paragraph 19 above) as a major reason for supporting the proposals in this report. If accepted, they will help to create exciting new possibilities for unity in mission. Making those possibilities a reality will depend, of course, on energy at the local level but also on wise, supportive, shared oversight at regional and national / connexional levels. Without that local energy is likely to become frustrated. Even where there is local engagement in abundance, lack of support, indifference or neglect by leaders, due to lack of consultation, can be fatal to new initiatives. Leadership in mission is a key strand in current Anglican thinking about the nature of episcopacy, and that will require a committed, imaginative approach to shared oversight.
93. The third area that we wish to highlight in this section is the development of liturgy to express changed relationships. This would certainly need to include plans for a service to inaugurate the new relationship of communion between our churches. This should take place not only after final approval for relevant decisions by the General Synod and the Conference, but also after the episcopal ordination of the President of the Conference. It would be appropriate that such a service be eucharistic, and that the tasks of presiding at the eucharist be shared by bishops from both churches. It would also be desirable that participation in the service be as full and as representative as possible. Recognition of the changed relationship of presbyters / priests from one church towards the other church should be included within the liturgy.
94. Attention should also be given to the question of what kind of liturgical provision might be used to mark the beginning of the ministry of a Methodist presbyter in the Church of England, or of an Anglican priest in the Methodist Church, either alongside a current ministry in the church in which they were ordained or as their primary appointment. Simply completing the necessary paper work is not adequate to the nature of the church as an ordered community of relationships. The point of the formalities is to enable a new relationship to come into being

between the ordained minister and another church, and it would be right to affirm that before God in a public service. In the case of the Church of England, it would be fitting for the licensing bishop to officiate, and for the service to be eucharistic, in order to express the fullness of the bishop's ministry as chief pastor, whose oversight of the church is being received by the presbyter. In the case of the Methodist Church, there would be an important role for the Superintendent Minister, and in due course this might also be considered as a context where the episcopal ministry of past-President bishops could appropriately be exercised.

### **Recommendations to be adopted at implementation**

95. If they agree in due course to implement these proposals, our two churches are invited to consider formally implementing the following recommendations:
- (a) invite each other's bishops to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of bishops as a sign of the unity and continuity of the Church, and to seek other ways in which bishops from one church may be able to exercise episcopal ministry in the other, by invitation and in accordance with any regulations which may from time to time be in force;
  - (b) work towards a common understanding of diaconal ministry that will in due course enable the interchangeability of deacons;
  - (c) consult with one another regarding developments in our understanding of the ministry of all the baptized, including lay as well as ordained ministry;
  - (d) encourage regular consultation and collaboration among members of our churches at all levels, and facilitate learning and exchange of ideas and information on theological, pastoral, and mission matters;
  - (e) identify practical ways in which those responsible for oversight in each church may benefit from regular consultation with those responsible for oversight in the other, particularly with regard to situations where there are significant opportunities for shared mission and evangelism;
  - (f) establish a Joint Commission to nurture our growth in communion, to coordinate the implementation of the Declaration of Communion, and report to the decision-making bodies of both our churches and;
  - (g) continue to work together for the full visible unity of the whole Church of God.

### **A provisional timetable for adoption and implementation of proposals by General Synod and the Conference**

96. In order for these proposals to be adopted and implemented there are various steps to be taken by both Churches. Each Church would embark on a process of discernment, leading to decisions by the Conference of the Methodist Church and the General Synod of the Church of England. If the proposals are adopted then there would be further essential steps for proceeding with the changes envisaged by the proposals, including changes to law and polity.
97. For the Methodist Church it is anticipated that these proposals could be brought to the Conference of 2018 for debate and decision. If they are adopted then a two-year process of consultation about any changes to Clause 4 of the Deed of Union begins, during which Church Councils, Circuit Meetings and District Synods will vote on the deferred special resolution. The

final decisions on the changes to the Deed of Union would then be made by the Conference of 2020. For the Church of England, a first debate at Synod would include consideration of outline proposals for legislation. As well as proceeding through the normal Synodical process for legislation, these proposals would be likely to be deemed to require reference to dioceses under Article 8, as well approval from the House of Bishops under Article 7. Attention would need to be given to enabling completion of this process within the current Quinquennium of General Synod, which concludes in July 2020.

## **Conclusion**

98. At the end of this report, it is appropriate to emphasise that, if its proposals are accepted, that will not be the end of the journey towards unity for the Church of England and the Methodist Church. That is in part because it cannot be predicted what further steps may unfold on our churches' shared journey of missionary discipleship as they go forward in communion with one another. It is also because the prayer of Christ for the unity of his Church cannot be satisfied by two churches only. That prayer is a prayer for the whole Church, for all who know him, to be one in him. We share in that prayer not just because we are hopeful about the future of ecumenical relations, but because it is the prayer of Jesus Christ.
99. 'Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen' (Ephesians 3:20-21).