

LIVING GOD'S COVENANT

Second Interim Report (2007)

of the

Joint Implementation Commission
under the Covenant between

The Methodist Church of Great Britain

and

The Church of England

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1 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

1. It is with mixed feelings of encouragement and disappointment that the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) brings this, its second Interim Report, to Conference and General Synod in the Summer of 2007. The JIC was set up, as a small group, in 2003 to monitor and promote the implementation of the Covenant. Since the first Interim Report *In the Spirit of the Covenant* was published in 2005, the JIC has had a full programme of work, on which we now report.
2. We have been grateful for a number of responses to that first interim report, notably from the Methodist Faith and Order Committee. These comments have been carefully considered by the JIC and have usefully informed our work. First, then, the encouragements

SOME ENCOURAGEMENTS

3. It is clear that the Covenant is being carried forward in many places at the 'grass roots' of our two churches, with much sharing in mission and ministry. This was brought home to us through the ten regional workshops for Methodist and Anglican Church leaders (approximately 600 people took part) that were held during 2006. The feedback on the progress of the Covenant from the road shows has been carefully analysed and the results are presented in the first chapter of this report.
4. At the national/connexional level there is close consultation between senior representatives of our churches, some of which predates the Covenant. The President and Vice-President of Conference meet every year with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, normally alternating between Methodist Church House and Lambeth Palace. The senior staffs of the churches have regular meetings to share information and to consult about developments. A new joint post (in addition to the long-standing joint post in Further Education) has been created with the appointment of the Revd Pearl Luxon as Child Protection/Safeguarding Adviser for both our churches. Fresh Expressions is a joint initiative of our churches, jointly staffed. We include a report of progress in Anglican-Methodist collaboration in the bilateral initiative Fresh Expressions, as an example of how our common mission can be enhanced by working closely together.
5. It is also helpful to the progress of the Covenant that both churches are continuing to work on issues of personal episkope or pastoral oversight. The Methodist Church has been grappling with the reports 'The Nature of Oversight' and 'What Sort of Bishops?', while the Church of England has done further work on whether the current canonical barrier to the admission of women to the episcopate should be removed. In July 2006 the General Synod agreed to take the process a stage further by setting up a legislative drafting group to prepare

proposals for women in the episcopate, for consideration by the Synod. We come back to questions of episcopate and episcopacy below.

6. Also on the encouraging side, we feel that we have made progress in clarifying several faith and order areas that the Common Statement, which led to the Covenant, had to leave unresolved. These cover church and state issues, lay ministry, and eucharistic theology.

Church and state

7. Our chapter in this report on church and state is a response to the Methodist Conference report of 2004 'Church, State and Establishment'. We believe that we have clarified several issues in this rather controversial area. Both Methodists and Anglicans may find that their understanding of the relationship of the churches to the state is deepened. The Methodist report asked, above all, that the Church of England should do more to share with its ecumenical partners its special opportunities for mission, for witness and service, which it enjoys by virtue of its historic connection with the state. We have majored on this challenge to the Church of England, while pointing out that Methodists need to be proactive in seizing the opportunities that are already, or may become available.

Lay ministry

8. Our chapter 'Encouraging Lay Ministry' is a response to many requests that our churches might achieve closer working together in this area. Both our churches value extremely highly the wide range of lay ministry that is now so vital to the worship and mission of the Church in this land. We have found both large areas of overlap and significant areas of difference in the lay ministries of our churches, particularly with regard to the roles of Local Preachers and Readers. We set out as clearly as we can the rather complex regulations affecting these two authorised lay ministries and show how they can already be shared locally between our two churches. Formal interchangeability of Readers and Local Preachers is not feasible at present, owing not only to the fact that the authorised functions of these two ministries are far from the same, but also to the different oversight structures of our churches. However, a further step in shared lay ministry would be closer cooperation in training and this is something we wish to challenge our churches to develop.

The Eucharist

9. The third area of faith and order work that we are able to present positively is eucharistic theology. The Common Statement An Anglican-Methodist Covenant concluded that there were no issues of our respective understandings of the Eucharist or Holy Communion that separated us. But the report did not substantiate that conclusion as much as it might have done and it has been suggested that further work would be helpful. In our chapter on this topic we have

pointed to the main official sources for the doctrine of the Eucharist in each church. We have set out some aspects of the common tradition – the tradition that John and Charles Wesley inherited from three centuries of the reformed English Church and finally we have summarised the current teaching of our churches. Anyone who takes the trouble to compare the Eucharistic liturgies in the Methodist Worship Book with those in the Church of England's Common Worship will be impressed with the similarities between them. Of course, there is a range of views held by individuals within both churches, but it is the teaching of the church that counts. In this, as in all these matters, we should not require from our covenant partner more than we require from our own communities.

SOME DISAPPOINTMENTS

10. In 2005 the JIC brought its first interim report *In the Spirit of the Covenant* to Conference and General Synod. It explored some of the themes on which the JIC had been working during its first fifteen months of active existence. We offered reflective biblical material on what it means to enter into a covenant relationship and some guidelines on how a Covenant lifestyle might develop. As individual Christians and as churches we find ourselves already embraced within God's redemptive covenant, the New Covenant made through Christ's life, work, death and resurrection. Any covenant between us can only be an outworking of that primary covenant which holds us in relationship with God the Holy Trinity. We said that living the Covenant would involve giving and receiving gracefully and gratefully from each other and an element of sacrifice.
11. We believe that there is much more work to do to get the Covenant, with its Affirmations and Commitments fully into the bloodstream of our churches. In some parts of the Church of England and the Methodist Church the Covenant has not been taken to heart. We are up against apathy about visible disunity and inertia about ecumenical responsibilities. There is huge scope for integrated working at various levels of our churches' life. Regular consultation and taking the other's interests into consideration should lead to joint discernment and decision-making wherever possible. We should be working together in every conceivable way until we act as one.

Full visible unity?

12. The dialogue between our two churches, that led, through *Commitment to Mission and Unity* and the *Formal Conversations*, to the Covenant, was grounded in our expressed shared commitment to work for the full visible unity of Christ's Church. That vision remains the horizon for our work and we should take all the steps we can to come closer to it. The full visible unity of the Church cannot be brought about simply by two churches acting bilaterally. But we remain committed by the Covenant to work to strengthen and deepen and make more visible and effective the unity that is already ours in Christ through faith and through our baptism into the Spirit-bearing Body. We do this for the sake of

God's mission in the world, just as Jesus, in his 'High Priestly Prayer' prays for all who will come to believe in him, 'that they may be one, so that the world may believe'. The visible divisions among Christians are still a scandal, a stumbling block, to faith for many and discredit Christian witness to the gospel. Every Anglican and every Methodist, who is concerned for mission and evangelism, has a powerful reason to make the Covenant work. In our 2008 report we hope to say more about the concrete form that the unity we seek might take.

Eucharistic practice

13. In the Spirit of the Covenant included a chapter on the eucharistic elements and the method of their reverent disposal after Communion. We pointed out that divergence of practice, based on the rules of our churches, in this sensitive area remains a point of division between us. We argued that the Covenant relationship would be helped if (a) ministers and congregations of both churches at least kept the rules of their churches, and (b) both our churches returned in their practice to our Lord's institution of Holy Communion at the Last Supper. For example, many Anglicans are communicated in individual wafers, that is to say bread that has not been broken; so we recommended that a small loaf (or a large wafer), from which all could be communicated, should be used. And the widespread Methodist practice of individual cups seems to go against the central symbolism of the common cup of blessing. It is not just the Covenant, but faithfulness to the New Testament (1 Corinthians 10.16-17) that leads us to put these challenges to our churches.

Episkope and episcopacy

14. The negative outcome of the Connexional process of consultation on 'What Sort of Bishops?' is a disappointment to the JIC and a major setback to the progress of the Covenant. We were particularly disappointed in the responses received by the group established to consider them. Less than half of District Synods responded and there was only a small number of responses from Circuits, local churches and individuals. Nevertheless it seems clear that there is little enthusiasm among many Methodist people for the Methodist Church to embrace episcopacy. As a result, a number of points come to mind.

15. We wonder how the Methodist Conference will reconcile the outcome of the recent consultation process with the numerous Conference resolutions, going right back more than half a century and made most explicit as recently as 2000, that the Methodist Church was willing in principle to embrace Episcopal ministry? Those resolutions have been one of the premises of the Covenant, to the extent that the Common Statement felt able to claim that no issue of principle stood between our churches on the question of episcopacy.

16. We assume that respondents were aware that if the Methodist Church were to adopt a form of personal episkope, in continuity with the greater part of the

Church through the centuries, and to do this in its own way and on its own terms, that step would have provided a key building block to bring about the interchangeability of ministries.

17. Where does this leave the work of the JIC, which was mandated to give priority to the question of the interchangeability of ministries? The JIC has done considerable work on this issue: our first interim report *In the Spirit of the Covenant* contains a chapter that sets out the respective disciplines of our churches on interchangeability and the theological rationale for them. We believe that this section repays study for all who are exercised about the interchangeability of ministries between our churches. The JIC has also worked on episcopate and episcopacy and made a substantial and constructive confidential submission to the group collating responses to 'What Sort of Bishops?'. The recommendations of the Methodist Council, arising from the consultation process encourage the JIC to bring forward its own proposals in due course. The JIC expects to do this in the Summer of 2008 when it has to give its final report. We believe that we will be able to suggest a 'route map' towards an authentic Methodist expression of episcopacy for the sake of mission and unity for consideration by Conference as it sees fit.
18. Meanwhile, Methodists have made it very clear that the equality of women and men in every area of the Church's life and ministry is regarded by Methodists as given by God and is not to be compromised. The JIC is fully aware that the first Methodist bishops would undoubtedly include at least one woman, that many Methodists find the tardiness of the Church of England over women in ordained ministry incomprehensible and upsetting, and that the Covenant will not make significant gains until the Church of England has decisively accepted women in the episcopate. We are encouraged that the Church of England is pursuing the matter and we would encourage the Methodist Church similarly to continue to work on the issue of episcopacy, perhaps using our 2008 report as a starting point.

BEYOND 2008

19. As we have noted, in the Summer of 2008 the Joint Implementation Commission will bring its 'final' report to Conference and General Synod. In that report we will take stock of the implementation of the Covenant up to that point and bring forward a further tranche of faith and order work. We intend to include material on the diaconate, on issues around the traditions of 'Calvinism and Arminianism' which were touched on in the Common Statement and which we have been asked to address further, and on episcopate and episcopacy, and possibly on church membership and Christian initiation. We shall also bring some recommendations on joint decision-making between our Churches.
20. Although the JIC will then have completed its initial mandate of five years, we believe that there will be a need for a successor body, with a renewed mandate and a refreshed membership. The JIC is a small group of six Anglicans and six

Methodists (with a representative of the United Reformed Church). Although the JIC does not expect to undertake all the work, even at the national/Connexional level, itself, it has struggled to cope with the volume of work that has been necessary. The contribution of every member counts.

21. The JIC was set up with the task of monitoring and promoting the implementation of the Covenant. We note that the Meissen Commission, which has a similar remit with regard to the relationship between the Church of England and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, has now completed its third quinquennium and shows no sign of flagging, while the Meissen Agreement continues to bear fruit in many areas. The use of the word 'Commission' signals that there is an agenda to be tackled and unfinished business to be brought to fruition. It is unrealistic to expect that all this can be completed comparatively quickly. We will say more about the future, as it seems to us, next year.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT

- The Church of England should do more to share the particular opportunities for mission that are available to it by virtue of its historic relationship with the state, and the Methodist Church should embrace these opportunities when they are offered.
- A Methodist representative should be involved in the deliberations of the Diocesan Vacancy in See Committee.
- The Methodist Church and the Church of England should consult together on the shape of a reformed House of Lords and consider making a joint submission to government.
- Anglicans and Methodists in both Houses of Parliament should work more closely together and, with MPs and Peers of other Christian traditions, should seek to present a united witness to Christian truths and values.
- We recommend that any initiatives in mission, including evangelism, are, wherever possible, shared between our two churches (as well as with others) and that our lay and ordained ministries, as well as the gifts of all our people, are deployed to make those initiatives more effective.
- We recommend that the existing co-operation and sharing of resources between our two churches should, wherever possible, be extended to lay ministerial training.
- We recommend that the Regional Training Partnerships and regional Methodist Training Partnerships should, in consultation with the appropriate bodies within our churches, develop training programmes that, as far as possible, meet our churches' training specifications for Readers and Local Preachers.
- We recommend that our two churches maximise the practical opportunities for the sharing of lay ministry (particularly that of Reader and Local Preacher) that are already legally available under the rules of our churches.
- We recommend that the Church of England consider whether it can lift the current canonical requirement for the episcopal Confirmation of those seeking a ministry in that Church, who have been Confirmed in the Methodist Church.

2 'LIVING GOD'S COVENANT' – PRACTICAL INITIATIVES

1. More than three years since the Anglican-Methodist Covenant was signed, a key question remains to be resolved: *How will we know that the Covenant is being implemented?* Initial answers can perhaps be found by analyzing evidence gathered at ten regional workshops organised during 2006 by the Joint Implementation Commission. This chapter examines the evidence and offers some tentative conclusions. It may be, however, that many of the issues being raised go beyond anything that can be handled through the Joint Implementation Commission.

TEN REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

2. During 2006 almost 600 people took part in a series of day workshops across England under the theme 'Living God's Covenant'. Although the workshops were open to everyone, the exercise was primarily intended for those whose role and responsibilities in our two Churches give them special opportunities for taking forward the Covenant. The aim was to give these people the opportunity to tease out the implications of the Covenant commitment for their own ministry and engagement in God's mission. Almost 900 comments were recorded during the discussions of around 60 small groups.
3. The groups themselves contained an almost equal mix of Anglicans and Methodists with a significant contribution from representatives of other Christian traditions. They included a wide mix of bishops, archdeacons, district Chairs, diocesan and district resource personnel, circuit superintendents, from a wide range of locations.
4. The groups were invited to record their discussions in response to four key questions:
 1. *In your experience as members of communities of Christ's disciples, what are the local needs?*
 2. *In your experience, what are the obstacles to implementing an Anglican-Methodist Covenant – to 'living God's covenant'?*
 3. *In what ways are these obstacles being addressed – or could they be addressed?*
 4. *What commitment are you yourselves ready to make to help local Christian communities to implement the Covenant and/or develop their discipleship in a covenant lifestyle?*

5. The picture painted by such a large number of balanced and informed focus groups is a significant representation not just of people's attitude to the Covenant but also of their capacity to respond to God's mission in their own context - with or without partners from other Christian traditions.
6. The following pages provide a summary of the feedback from the workshop groups. The summary is based on a structured analysis of the responses to the first three questions. The responses to question four proved to be either very generalised or focused on their local context. Hence they did not lend themselves to the same kind of analysis and are not included in this paper. Some interpretation has been unavoidable in what follows as part of the process of building a coherent picture. As far as possible, however, any evaluation has been held over to the final section.

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1 – PERCEIVED NEEDS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Changed attitudes

7. The aspect of local need most talked about by the groups at the regional workshops concerned the attitudes of people.
8. This was sometimes expressed negatively: e.g. 'to stop seeing one another competitively', 'to let God heal memories of past hurts', 'to overcome fears for the future'. One group more specifically identified the fear that arises when it is assumed that ecumenism only becomes relevant in the context of decline. However, another group was clear that problems can be catalysts for opportunities. One group declared, 'The rifts of history are unimportant'.
9. Mostly, however, the groups were highlighting what they saw as a lack of something positive. Often this was as basic as 'a lack of energy', but this was frequently linked to 'a lack of vision', an inability to see new possibilities or to be ready for a long-term commitment. Three groups spoke in similar ways of the need for 'confidence to let go'. Another emphasised the need for patience. A third spoke of a need 'to see beyond 'the box''(which they labeled 'contentment'). Against this, one group identified the need for 'security in a fast changing culture'.
10. Many groups highlighted the need for better relationships, for openness, for practical hospitality, for deepened knowledge and understanding of each other at all levels by both clergy and laity. Maybe our need includes not just reconciliation of ministries but, as two groups suggested, 'reconciliation of clergy'. Were these groups pointing to continuing evidence of personal distrust and suspicion between clergy and ministers in our two churches?
11. An important ingredient identified a few times is our honesty with each other, 'being truthful about good and bad experiences'.

12. Many people, it was suggested, are simply unaware of the covenant commitment between our two Churches; never mind what it might signify. For them the need is to increase their consciousness and to bring them to a point of 'ownership'.
13. For others, including those who are suspicious of the covenant or of the policies of the other Church, the need is for 'a building of trust'. Only two groups, however, acknowledged the importance of how we behave, how we 'live the covenant'.
14. Several groups spoke of the need to be 'world-facing', to accept culture change and to 'pay the price'. However, one group was keen to affirm the need to retain the cultures of both Churches. Two groups spoke forcefully about appreciating that 'our differences are a gift' and that they should be allowed to inspire us. And a third group, drawing attention to one of the key features of a covenant lifestyle, highlighted the need for us 'to learn to receive gratefully'.
15. Two groups tied their quest for better relationships firmly into the love of God and gave it a spiritual focus. Mission was mentioned several times as the driver for the whole enterprise. As one group put it, we need to 'keep uppermost in our mind "what is the church for?"'.

Mission

16. One group summed up the messages under this heading by identifying a need 'to do things (mission) leading to the building of relationships and dealing with barriers'. Perhaps significantly, this reverses the commonly expressed view that we need to heal relationships in order to do mission.
17. The missionary calling is to heal relationships between the church and the community, and in the locality itself. For this task, one group specified a need for 'evangelising the Church'. 'We want to use our resources - human/plant etc - to work towards the growth of the Kingdom,' claimed another group. The missionary calling was then unpacked in a number of ways:
 - Groups spoke of a need for a shared understanding of the *context* of mission, and a shared engagement with the challenges and pain of an internationalized and yet 'dis-integrated' post-industrial society.
 - Groups frequently yearned for *vision*, 'to discern God's will,' stressing the outward and purposeful nature of our calling. Intuitively they were recognising that the Covenant between our two churches must never become an end in itself.
 - Groups pleaded for more *freedom* for local people to 'just get on with it' – and for more empowerment of lay people.
 - At a practical level this all meant there was a need for *projects* to focus mission and to bring people together in joint activity.

Other needs identified

18. To support our covenant commitment in the context of God's mission, four other ingredients were identified:

- A need for the time, structures, right relationships and trust that will enable effective *communication* - ranging from simple information and awareness through to 'opportunities for real encounter'.
- A need for 'more *enthusiasm* and less control!' A need for new ways (and permissions) to transcend mis-matched territorial boundaries and apparently inflexible disciplines.
- A need for a *team approach* to ministry, lay and ordained, but also between Anglican and Methodist ministers in a locality.
- A need to focus on the Church's *task* ('i.e. mission and its Christological basis') – on God's mission – and on what would be 'good news' for our communities.

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 2 - PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO COVENANT IMPLEMENTATION

Boundaries and structures

19. The sense was widespread that mismatched boundaries and ways of doing things present an almost overwhelming obstacle. The current structures absorb energy. 'We fiddle with church life rather than take radical steps.'

20. Obstacles include unsuitable and costly buildings, over-worked clergy, and complex bureaucracy with 'money in the wrong place' – but also an attitude that 'views resources as burdens rather than tools.' 'Individually we may be doing a lot that's worthwhile - get together and we get bogged down in detail.'

21. Many groups named the reluctance and lack of imagination of church leaders as an obstacle to creative ecumenical mission. This would include 'Leaders who avoid making the right noises to set an ecumenical climate,' and 'Leaders who fail to recognise, acknowledge and harness the breadth and depth of ecumenical involvement of church members every day.'

Unhelpful attitudes and behavior

22. The obstacles under this heading were identified as impediments not just to ecumenism, but also to mission and healthy Christian community life.

23. At the top of the list, groups named self-preoccupation, which comes in many guises: on the one hand it presents itself as 'an implicit sense of self-sufficiency,'

leading to a lack of urgency; on the other hand it is fed by 'fear of decline' and a 'lack of confidence' One group asked, 'What do we mean by mission - when our efforts are geared to survival and not to mission?'

24. Sheer ignorance amongst church members was then highlighted, leading to inertia – an 'unwillingness to move outside our comfort zones.' This state of mind, as described by the groups, seems to go beyond either despondency or complacency, and perhaps indicates a deeper spiritual burn-out - even, as one group labelled it, 'apathy'.

25. Three other problematic attitudes were identified:

- Hurt - mostly linked to the dynamics of personal relationships. Phrases used included, 'Lack of trust', 'power relationships', 'spiritual arrogance', 'perceived barriers that may not be real.'
- Indiscipline: One group asked sharply, 'Problem - which Church of England is my partner?' Difficulties were identified 'trying to reconcile groups within each congregation to find ways of going forward.'
- Tiredness: 'What can we give up so that we can work on this?' 'Energy is drained towards denominational difficulties.'

26. Other behavioural problems mentioned include a tendency to act unilaterally, and the inability of denominations to empower others to act for them.

Other obstacles identified

- 'People come with denominational and experiential baggage which is hard to identify and offload.'
- Cultural differences may include 'differences in ecclesiological/theological style,' 'differences in worship,' and different habits ('e.g. meeting times').
- For some, 'Covenant is a difficult word, not generally understood. Covenant is 'jargon' - would partnership be better?' 'Is mission suffering because we are focusing on partnership?'
- A few went on to argue for other priorities: 'Why put all this effort into matters ecumenical? A divided church is not the same as a diverse church.' In an apathetic or even hostile context, 'Denominationalism is irrelevant to many.'
- Also mentioned were: Inadequate strategies - 'a lack of joined up thinking.' Consumerism - The 'choice culture' as inimical to a covenant commitment. Lack of stories 'Where are the good news stories that would encourage others?'

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 3 - ADDRESSING THE OBSTACLES

27. In response to such a broad range of identified needs and obstacles, suggestions for addressing the obstacles tended to be of a very general nature.

A Focus on Mission

28. It was widely argued that our two Churches would grow closer through listening and responding to people's needs in the wider community – for example, by tackling areas of social injustice and developing sustainable communities. One group argued that 'seeking community links' provides the way forward to 'build up an identity beyond church membership for church members.' This would entail 'being involved together in projects not focused on the church.' 'Ecumenism isn't big enough;' argued one group, 'we must see it in a mission perspective. It needs a bigger picture.'
29. As one group expressed it, 'Ecumenical activity is not restructuring, but building relationships and community.' 'Everything we do, we should do with other denominations.'
30. Several groups highlighted the importance of learning to trust: 'Don't all do everything all the time. Trust others to do/say on behalf of all.' Success can be emphasised: 'e.g. a joint ecumenical Youth and Children's worker.' Another group warned, however, 'What works somewhere doesn't always work somewhere else.'

Attending to God

31. As one group expressed it, 'We don't know where we are going except that it is God's journey, not ours.' Another reminded itself that a covenant is made between ourselves and God, as well as denominations.
32. 'We need to get congregations to see the whole agenda in a positive light.' A shared vision within congregations was seen to be necessary to enable personality issues to be overcome. 'Openness is a key', argued one group, suggesting that the greatest ecumenical work is where the label isn't being used.
33. If a big enough God-centred vision is to take hold, it was argued, 'people need to be educated and trained to recognise why ecumenism is essential - and then put it into practice.' Several groups called for more joint training - of lay leaders as well as ministers. Groups identified scope for joint training initiatives locally for pastoral visitors, Local Preachers and Readers, and those working with children and young people. We all need 'greater experience of a common life.' But 'chemistry is as important as covenant relationships.'

Freeing people

34. The call for greater local freedom was carefully argued by a number of groups and cannot be read as an irresponsible rejection of authority. Two comments reflect the tone of much else: 'The covenant enables us to have the freedom to improve our relationships as the body of Christ.' 'Informal agreements are

important, based on trust. Give people permission to think new thoughts.' This will involve finding the right people to relate to, ensuring cross-representation at all levels and being allowed to stop doing some things in order to be more radical.

Other possibilities

35. Within the broader group discussion, various more specific ideas and suggestions were recorded, any one of which could be significant if widely adopted.
- By planning ecumenically, it should be possible to appoint people to new initiatives from within existing deployment rather than seek more funding.
 - Efforts can be made to develop better communication and 'greater transparency'.
 - Partnerships can perhaps best be focused at a level 'close enough to the ground but with authority in each.' E.g. deanery/circuit or archdeaconry/circuit.
 - Overcoming the problems of mismatched boundaries was thought to be 'a long way down the line'. However, the JIC was specifically asked to put pressure on to change these issues – with special reference to Church of England structures.
 - Other suggestions included encouraging dual membership, more effective consultative procedures (especially over appointments) and a system for auditing initiatives.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

Covenant living – an essential ingredient for effective mission

36. Feedback from the 2006 regional workshops suggests that any discussion of 'implementing the Covenant' will at some point involve addressing the attitudes and conduct of individuals and communities of Christ's disciples as they engage in God's mission. Implementing the Anglican-Methodist Covenant cannot be treated as a separate issue apart from the life and mission of the Church, as a whole.
37. The Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain is thus best understood as a specific public expression – a committed part - of a potentially much greater whole. God's people make their covenant commitment to each other in the context of God's covenant with them and with the whole created order. Such a covenant will then be not just 'implemented' but 'lived'. This was an important insight from the Biblical studies in our 2005 Interim Report, 'In the Spirit of the Covenant'. It is now fully endorsed by the evidence of local experience and the whole tenor of the workshop discussions.
38. This has two implications: (1) Christ's people will inevitably fail to 'implement' a covenant while they continue to fall short in discipleship and mission. (2)

Conversely, faithful discipleship and engagement in God's mission is also seriously inhibited so long as Christ's people fail to tease out the implications of what it means to live as God's covenant people. The Covenant between our two Churches challenges because it is a specific and grounded application of a general principle.

Covenant living – a commitment for the long term

39. The workshop responses, however, identified a great deal of hesitation among local churches about the long-term commitment that covenant living evidently entails. Too often, the groups reported, people's behaviour and the manner in which decisions are taken seem to be locked into the structures in which people find themselves. The structures themselves may not be the problem, but rather the culture that has gathered round the structures over the years. The result is either paralysis or a 'clutching at straws', an uncritical grasping after the next 'quick fix'. When this happens, people find it hard to access the spiritual resources they might need even to contemplate a long-term covenant commitment with those who are significantly 'other'.
40. The 'otherness' of our covenant partners remains an issue. However much theological consensus can be achieved, cultural differences are likely to remain deeply embedded – not least because they are to a great extent the product of our divergent history. Achieving any degree of cultural convergence could take a very long time. However, as living organisms engaged in diverse ways in God's mission, our Churches will continue to evolve and change. Continuing cultural differences may well be an inevitable by-product of missionary diversity – as much in the future as in the past, and as much within our Churches as between them. If this assessment is correct, considerably more work is needed to tease out the implications.

Covenant living – a call to a relational discipleship

41. The challenge of covenant living may perhaps best be understood as a call to a relational discipleship. This approach is encouraged both by the Biblical studies contained in our 2005 Interim Report, and by the way so much of the workshop discussion focused on attitudes and behaviour.
42. The characteristics of a relational discipleship, based on covenant insights, would appear to include trust, generosity, gratitude, a sense of purpose beyond self-pre-occupation, constancy, consistency and accountability.
43. These characteristics are then to be applied not just in the lives of individual Christians but also to the corporate life of Christ's Church at every point – whether it is the circuit or the connexion, or the parish, the diocese or the province. These are among the Spirit-filled dynamics that enable the body to be

one body made up of disparate parts (1Corinthians 12.12ff), and that enable the parts to be accountable to the whole and the whole accountable to the parts.

44. It is in this context that the Joint Implementation Commission continues to address two parallel tasks: first seeking to resolve the remaining differences of understanding between our two Churches, and secondly assisting our Churches in identifying and adopting patterns of group self-discipline that reflect covenant insights. Both strands in the JIC's work are needed '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' (from the first Commitment of An Anglican-Methodist Covenant) – and from both strands are likely to emerge new insights into what may be meant by the phrase 'organic unity'.

FRESH EXPRESSIONS

45. Against this background, we now turn to a particularly significant example of joint working between our churches, Fresh Expressions, and are pleased to include the following report by Steven Croft and Peter Pillinger:
46. Our culture is changing rapidly: there is a widening gap between where much of the population finds itself in terms of faith and life, on the one hand, and the culture of the mainline churches, on the other. In response to this gap, for some time Christians have been developing new forms of church for a changing world. The Church of England established a working party with Methodist representation in 2002 with Graham Cray, Bishop of Maidstone as chair. The working party produced its report in 2004: *Mission Shaped Church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context*.
47. The report has sold over 20,000 copies and has been highly influential in Great Britain and elsewhere in the world. It develops new collective language for a range of different new ways of being church and calls them fresh expressions of church and commends their blessing and development. The General Synod commended the report in 2004 and later in the same year the Methodist Conference established 'developing fresh ways of being church' as one of its key priorities.
48. There is now a very large number of fresh expressions of church across every church tradition and social context. Many involve light touch, grass roots ecumenical collaboration. More than 640 initiatives are registered with Fresh Expressions and recent statistics from the Church of England show that this is only a small proportion of what is happening. Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people are involved, many from age and social groups missing from other expressions of church.
49. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Methodist Council established Fresh Expressions as part of the response to this grass roots movement of mission, the *Mission Shaped Church* report and the Conference priorities. The

initiative works across both churches and in partnership with a number of other mission agencies. It has been established for five years in the first instance and is largely funded through the generosity of the Lambeth Partners through the Lambeth Fund but with key secondments from a number of other bodies, including the Methodist Connexional Team.

50. Fresh Expressions structures its work in four key areas: renewing vision, gathering news, resourcing growth and developing training. There is a core team of fifteen full and part time staff: Anglicans and Methodists working together under the leadership of the Revd Dr. Steven Croft. A wider group of over 30 Associate Missioners has been established – mainly younger practitioners who are both Anglican and Methodists. There is a collaborative structure of consultations with other partners through a series of Round Table meetings focussed around (1) Mission agencies and denominations, (2) Research, (3) Discipleship, (4) Theological Education and (5) Fresh Expressions in a sacramental and contemplative tradition.
51. The initiative reports to a Board of Directors appointed by the Lambeth Fund with both Anglican and Methodist representation and chaired by Sir Christopher Wates. There are also separate lines of reporting to the two Archbishops and the Methodist Council through the Connexional Team.
52. During the first half of its life, the Fresh Expressions team has spoken to over 20,000 people in consultations in most Anglican Dioceses and Methodist Districts. The Fresh Expressions website receives on average over 500 visits each day with more than a thousand documents downloaded each month. More than 600 individual fresh expressions have registered with the site involving more than 40,000 people. Over 80,000 copies of three editions of the newspaper, Expressions, have been distributed. The team has produced two DVDs telling the story of a wide range of different fresh expressions of church and three booklets to provide key practical resources (Moving on in a Mission Shaped Church, Starting a Fresh Expression and Listening for Mission). Peter Pillinger and Andrew Roberts, two of the Methodist team members, have written a book for the 2007 Methodist Conference. The team is currently holding a series of day conferences around the country on Hard Questions on ecclesiology and mission with fourteen distinguished Anglican and Methodist contributors and this will be published as a series of essays in 2008.
53. At the mid point of the initiative, Fresh Expressions has established through careful listening across the churches the key training tools for developing training and ministry in this area of church life. All are offered in partnership with Anglican and Methodist churches locally and with other churches as appropriate. These are:
 - An ongoing programme of vision days to introduce the idea of fresh expressions of church within a mixed economy
 - A short six week course, Mission Shaped Intro, for local congregations

- A one year part time training course, Mission Shaped Ministry, for clergy and lay teams. This is being offered locally by dioceses, districts and other agencies in local partnerships
 - Learning networks of practitioners gathering around an innovative online guide to fresh expressions, called Share, in partnership with Church Army.
54. The team has also been active within the structures of both denominations working on the development of lay and ordained pioneer ministry and frameworks for the recognition of new ways of being church.
55. There are active conversations between the team and the churches in Scotland, Ireland and Wales and indeed in other parts of the world.
56. Discussions are currently taking place within the two churches and with a range of other bodies about the most appropriate way of continuing to encourage fresh expressions of church in ecumenical partnership beyond the current life of the initiative in 2009.
57. Full details of all the teams activities and regular updates are available at www.freshexpressions.org.uk The Revd Dr. Steven Croft, Archbishops' Missioner and Team Leader of Fresh Expressions The Revd Pete Pillinger Fresh Expressions Missioner and Connexional Team member.

3 CHURCH, STATE AND ESTABLISHMENT

A response by the Joint Implementation Commission to the report received by the Methodist Conference in 2004 and commended for study and consultation.

BACKGROUND

1. In 2004 the Methodist Conference received a report from its Faith and Order Committee entitled *Church, State and Establishment* (referred to here as ‘the Report’). This was commended for study and consultation. The Methodist members of the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) were directed to take the Report’s conclusions into account in their discussion of the implementation of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant, and ecumenical partners – and specifically the Church of England – were invited to make a response to the Report.
2. The Report was produced out of a perceived need to address the issue of ‘Church and State with particular reference to Establishment’, which was flagged up in *Commitment to Mission and Unity*, the report of the Informal Conversations between the British Methodist Church and the Church of England. That report noted that further work on the issue would need to be done, and this need has become more pressing with the signing of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant in 2003 and the fact that the Covenant document did not address the issue specifically.
3. The JIC recognises that the issue of church, state and establishment is of major importance in its discussions on implementing the Covenant and that the Methodist report is, therefore, relevant and timely.
4. The JIC therefore welcomes both the directive to its Methodist members to take into account the conclusions of the Report and the invitation to the Church of England to respond to the Report. The JIC believes that it is in an advantageous position to address many of the issues raised in the Report and hence offers this statement as part of its work in monitoring and promoting the implementation of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. With the exception of some observations on oaths taken by Church of England clergy, the statement is limited to the issues raised by the original report. It includes, after an Introduction, first a Church of England response, by Anglican members of the JIC (who have consulted appropriately within the Church of England), to the most controversial issues that have been raised, and then some observations by the JIC on this response and on possible ways forward. The JIC has also benefited from ongoing consultation with the Revd Dr Jane Craske, a member of the group that produced *Church, State and Establishment*. The discussion below refers to the arrangements current at the end of 2006: the JIC recognises that some areas (the membership

of a reformed House of Lords and the manner of making some senior appointments within the Church of England, for example) are under review. Although the Methodist Church is a Church in three nations, this response, like the original report to Conference, focuses mainly on the situation in England.

INTRODUCTION

5. The JIC believes that issues affecting the relationship between the churches and the state should be seen primarily in a missiological perspective, as an aspect of the presence and witness of the Christian Church in the midst of the life of the nations and of civil society. In other words, the relationship must make sense in terms of the nature and mission of the Church of Christ. As Church, State and Establishment itself recognises (paragraph 91), the litmus test in the area of church and state is whether a particular relationship, between any particular church and the state to which it relates, helps or hinders the Christian Church in carrying out an effective mission, particularly in bearing witness to the gospel and in bringing Christian principles to bear on questions of public concern. It is in this light that we attempt a response to Church, State and Establishment.
6. The JIC is also aware that the issue can be seen from many perspectives and that strong views are held by individuals on various points. It is true to say that consciousness of being the established church is part of the Church of England's self-understanding and affects its life profoundly. Notwithstanding that, there have always been some in the Church of England who have called for a loosening of its ties with the State. Similarly, as the Report makes clear, there is no single Methodist view. However, as a non-established church, the Methodist Church is bound to see the situation differently, and there will always be a strong voice within it which would not want to be 'established' in the way that the Church of England currently is. Our perspectives as churches are conditioned by our histories; there is an element of contingency in our positions. But history moves on and the churches need to discern the appropriate response to changing circumstances.
7. On behalf of the Methodist Church, Church, State and Establishment asks perfectly appropriate questions of its Covenant partner and requests some explanations and clarifications. It notes (in the Conclusions and Recommendations) that, among Methodist responses to An Anglican- Methodist Covenant, one of the subjects most mentioned was the establishment of the Church of England and that almost all raised questions about, or were hostile to establishment. Some Methodists believe that it is inappropriate for a church to be established by law; the Church should always be free of state ties. Other Methodists, while not necessarily opposed to a working relationship between church and state, feel that Methodists have been disadvantaged or marginalised by the way that the establishment of the Church of England has often been expressed in practice.

8. The report comments, however, that while there needs to be a serious conversation on this topic, it needs to be based on correct information about what the establishment of the Church of England involves today, particularly with regard to the control of doctrine and worship. It refers also – and Anglicans need to take this to heart – to Methodist experiences of abuse of privilege by Anglicans, and points to the consequent need for a degree of reconciliation and a healing of memories. The JIC acknowledges the importance of these points and realises that experience counts far more than words do.
9. While not calling for disestablishment, the Report suggests that further changes in the current form of establishment are desirable. In particular, it recommends that the Church of England might do more to share its opportunities and responsibilities with partner churches. It asks that ecumenical partner churches should be involved in the planning of both national and local services and should not simply be asked to take part in something that has been decided already by Anglicans.
10. The ‘most controversial issues’, where according to the report, the Methodist Church might seek changes to the current pattern of establishment, are identified by the report as the role of bishops in the House of Lords and the appointment of bishops. The report also requests clarification of the role of the monarch as Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

A CHURCH OF ENGLAND RESPONSE TO THESE ISSUES

11. Before the JIC as a whole comments on the issues raised in the Report and considers how the Report’s conclusions may assist in fulfilling the implementation of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant, it will be helpful to document the response by the Church of England members of the JIC to the ‘most controversial issues’ which the Report identifies and which clearly are of concern to some Methodists.

Bishops in the House of Lords

12. The report suggests that 'Methodists might challenge the Church of England to rethink its defence of the current number of episcopal seats' (26) in the House of Lords in the interests of a broader representation of other faith traditions, including other Christian churches. It also challenges the assumption that bishops are able to speak on behalf of the whole Christian community (paragraphs 95, 117).
13. The Church of England has argued for more than thirty years that other churches should be represented alongside the bishops in the House of Lords. In its submission (May 1999) to the Wakeham Commission on reform of the Second Chamber, the Church of England recognised that ‘a reformed second chamber that truly aspires to serve the nation must be seen to take full account

of the nation's growing ethnic and cultural diversity. To a significant degree, such diversity is reflected in different religious traditions.' It went on to note that the Church of England was itself 'a broad church with a substantial range of cultural and ethnic diversity'. It welcomed the proposal that other religious faith communities should also be represented.

14. While accepting that the number of bishops might need to be reduced to make way for these extra seats, the Church of England pointed out that a major reduction in the numbers of bishops would make it difficult to cover the responsibilities that were entailed in playing a full part in the life of the House. As a matter of fact, while the Church of England resisted a major cut in the number of bishops in the Lords, it did not insist on the current number of episcopal seats, but argued that it would be difficult to work with less than twenty. (This was, no doubt, because the agenda of the House is determined by the Government only two or three weeks in advance and there needs to be a sufficient pool of bishops to provide adequate coverage at short notice.) It urged that this level should not be maintained at the expense of other churches or faith communities, but that, if necessary, the overall allocation should be increased.
15. It might also be noted that, unlike hereditary or life peers, bishops lose their seat in the Lords on retirement, though archbishops and a few other bishops have been offered life peerages. Life peers are appointed for the distinguished contribution that they have made to society. Among the Anglican life peers there are currently four who are retired Church of England bishops or archbishops (and at least two others who are Church of England clergy). And among Methodist life peers there are three who are Methodist ministers.
16. On the question of what constituency the bishops feel that they represent and for whom they think they speak, the submission to the Wakeham Commission said: 'Whilst the Church of England remains ready and willing to speak in Parliament as appropriate for its Christian partners and for people of other faiths and none, it does not for one moment pretend any exclusive claim to do so.'

The appointment of bishops

17. Regarding the respective roles of church and state in the process for the appointment of bishops, the report notes that some Methodists might wish to argue that 'the process of choosing leaders should be solely the business of the Church, with no involvement from the state.' However, in order to meet Anglican sensitivities, 'it might be acceptable, perhaps even valuable for senior appointments to be affirmed, and thereby recognised, by the state if the process of nomination was transparently and solely in the church's hands,' as in the case of the appointment of suffragan bishops, where the diocesan, with the approval of the archbishop of the province, puts forward two names to the Crown and by convention the first name is accepted (paragraph 118, italics original).

18. It is important to note that, under the arrangements that have been in place for the past thirty years, no name can be considered by the Crown that has not come from the Church. Two names are proposed by the General Synod's Crown Nominations Commission, after extensive local and regional consultation, which usually involves ecumenical partners (who are sometimes invited to propose names). One should also note that the Prime Minister takes independent advice on what sort of appointment would be helpful in the wider community, not least ecumenically, in the exercise of his or her discretion in recommending one name to the Sovereign. (If the Prime Minister does not feel able to forward one of the names to the Sovereign, he or she may ask the Commission for additional nominations). It should be recognised that many in the Church of England see the present arrangements as a process in which the nominations are already fully in the church's hands.
19. It is not particularly a matter of concern to Anglicans that the Prime Minister may not be an Anglican but may belong to another Christian church, for example, the Methodist Church. It is also acknowledged that a Prime Minister may not be a practising Christian. The role of the Prime Minister (in this constitutional context, acting non-politically as the Queen's First Minister) is required by the principle of ministerial responsibility. Under the constitution, the Sovereign is not publically accountable for her actions and cannot be called to the bar of Parliament to explain them. It is the role of ministers to advise the Sovereign and to take responsibility for that advice. One should appreciate that, under the constitution, the monarch's scope for initiative (the personal prerogative), though not negligible, is highly circumscribed. Although a direct nomination of bishops, from the Church to the Sovereign, has been mooted in the recent past, it is understood that such an innovation would be considered constitutionally improper.
20. In recent years the General Synod has debated the principle and the process of the appointment of bishops on several occasions. It has acted to provide greater openness and transparency in the process of selecting names, but it has not wanted to change the basic principle of a partnership between church and state, with the church taking the leading role. In addition to the Church of England having control of the small number of names from which the candidate will be chosen, once a name has been approved by the Crown, there are four further stages where the Church gives its approval (and in extreme circumstances may decline to do so): (1) the formal Election by the College of Canons of the relevant diocese; (2) the Confirmation of Election by the Archbishop of the Province, when the legal authority to carry out episcopal functions in a particular diocese is conveyed ('the Spiritualities'); (3) the actual consecration or ordination of the candidate (if not already a bishop) by the archbishop of the province and, normally, many other bishops; (4) the acclamation of the bishop by the people as part of the liturgy of ordination or consecration.

21. It is generally believed within the Church of England that the arrangements for the appointment of diocesan bishops have worked quite well since they were introduced in the mid-1970s, and that most Anglicans believe that no ecclesiological point of principle is being infringed – that is to say that there is nothing in the present arrangements that challenges the integrity of the Church of England as an expression of the Church of Christ. However, if at any point in the future the Church of England were to sense that its needs and voice were not being fully heeded and that it was coming under pressure to accept pastors not of its own choosing, or if the present arrangements for senior appointments were to become an obstacle to the Church of England and another church taking a significant step towards greater visible unity, there would undoubtedly be a strong case for a change.

Supreme Governor

22. The Report asks for clarification of what is meant by 'Supreme Governor' of the Church of England – the title given to monarchs since Queen Elizabeth I. Several points can be made on this issue. But the first thing to note is that the Sovereign is regarded as being within the Church of England, not outside it, and as exercising a care for its well-being.

23. The title 'Supreme Head in earth', claimed by King Henry VIII and often seen as offensive, was qualified by the clergy of the Church of England with the words 'as far as the law of Christ allows'. Henry is on record as explaining that the title referred to a temporal headship, opposed to the temporal or political claims of the papacy, and that he naturally acknowledged that Christ was the Head of his mystical Body. The title was continued in the reigns of Edward VI, the Protestant reforming boy king, and of Mary Tudor and her Roman Catholic reaction. It was abandoned by Elizabeth I and was replaced by the title 'Supreme Governor'.

24. The Sovereign is, of course, 'the Head of State' of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. However, as used today, the title 'Supreme Governor' derives from the doctrine of the 'Royal Supremacy' of the Reformation period, but is not identical with it: it needs to be seen in historical perspective, as well as in its constitutional context.

25. Canon A 7, which is part of the law of the land, says: 'We acknowledge that the Queen's excellent Majesty, acting according to the laws of the realm, is the highest authority under God in this kingdom, and has supreme authority over all persons in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil.'

26. One should note from this canon that the Royal Supremacy does not concern only the Church of England: it embraces the whole realm and includes civil as well as ecclesiastical matters. The citizens of the United Kingdom are subjects of the Crown and, because the authority to enact laws, to administer justice and to defend the realm derives from the Crown, not from politicians, this is a guarantee of their liberties. This canon is, therefore, a statement about where

sovereignty is located in the constitution. It was framed in the struggle with the papacy for sovereignty within the nation and is intended to exclude any coercive foreign jurisdiction.

27. It should also be noted that, according to this canon, the Sovereign must act according to the laws of the realm, which are made by Parliament. Our history shows that ultimately Parliament is supreme. In the United Kingdom we have a constitutional or parliamentary monarchy. Sovereignty resides in 'the Queen in Parliament under God'. The role of the monarch vis à vis the Church of England is a constitutional one, just as it is in all other areas of its operation.
28. Against the background of this Canon, one should underline the fact that the Church of England has control of its doctrine and liturgy (through the Doctrine and Worship Measure, 1974), of its discipline (through the recent Clergy Discipline Measure), and of its governance (through the Enabling Act 1919 and the legislation that brought the General Synod into existence in 1969-70). The role of the monarch as 'Supreme Governor' does not prevent the Church of England from controlling its affairs in these crucial areas. The Methodist Church exercises similar powers (although less 'entrenched' constitutionally) by virtue of various private Acts of Parliament.
29. Furthermore, the monarch does not have any 'executive' authority in the Church of England, but participates fully in its worship, while being advised by her ministers with regard to 'Crown' appointments (particularly those of bishops and deans of cathedrals). The Queen has attended the inaugural Eucharist of the General Synod, in Westminster Abbey, at the beginning of each synodical quinquennium since 1970 and has been present for the Synod's first session, in Church House, Westminster, when she is invited to address the Synod. (In her speech in November 2005 she affirmed that the Christian gospel could meet the spiritual hunger of our times, welcomed the Anglican- Methodist Covenant and urged the Synod to continue to work for the 'full visible unity' of Christ's Church.) The Anglican-Methodist Covenant was signed in her presence, as was the covenant between the four Presidents of Churches Together in England.
30. Contrary to what is sometimes assumed, there appears to be no constitutional or legal requirement that the Sovereign should be a professing Anglican: only that she or he should 'join in communion' (as the Act of Settlement, 1701, puts it) with the Church of England. Under Canon B 15A baptised communicants in good standing in their own church are invited to receive Holy Communion at a Eucharist celebrated in the Church of England. It appears that the monarch could be a member of any Christian Church, whose own discipline allowed him or her to 'join in communion with the Church of England'.
31. It is well known that the present Queen seeks to serve all her subjects throughout the Commonwealth, regardless of differences of denomination or of faith. Since she came to the throne, she has consistently asked all the peoples

of the Commonwealth for their prayers. The Methodist Conference sends a Loyal Address to the Sovereign as Head of State. When she resides in Scotland, the Queen joins in worship in the Kirk, the established or 'national' church of that country. She or her representative, the Lord High Commissioner, is present at the Church of Scotland's General Assembly and addresses it by invitation. The relationship between the monarch and the Christian Church in the United Kingdom is not, therefore, confined to the monarch's relationship with the Church of England, but takes various forms according to the tradition and polity of the respective churches.

The Church of England and Parliament

32. Both the powers of the General Synod to enact doctrinal, liturgical and other legislation by Canon, without reference to Parliament, and the need for parliamentary approval of Measures, are fairly explained in Church, State and Establishment paragraphs 35-37, together with their footnotes. It is perhaps worth adding that a Measure is sometimes required when the Synod wishes to break new ground and to legislate in an area that has not been covered before. Measures, which cannot be amended by Parliament, enable Canons to be enacted. Measures are scrutinised by the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament, which decides whether they are 'expedient' or not. In making this judgment, the Committee must have special regard to the rights of the subjects of the Crown, in other words they must be vigilant to safeguard the liberties of citizens. Most people would probably see this as a prudent safeguard.
33. A relationship between the Church and the legislature is not unique to the Church of England. Only the Church of England and the Church of Scotland are 'established' by law (though in different ways), and the Church of England in Wales was disestablished in 1920, becoming 'The Church in Wales'. But all churches are subject to the law of the land – trust law, property law, charity law, laws to protect the vulnerable, and so on. No church can legislate for itself in a way that clashes with the law made by Parliament. The Methodist Church was re-united by Act of Parliament in 1932, but the church did not have the freedom to alter the doctrinal standards contained in the Deed of Union made under that Act until Parliament so enacted in the Methodist Church Act 1976. The United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain also came into being by various private Acts of Parliament. The involvement of the legislature in the affairs of a Church may be seen to be, to some extent, a matter of degree.

The Oath of Allegiance and the Act of Homage

34. Although oaths were not referred to in Church, State and Establishment, a word of explanation about the Oath of Allegiance and the Act of Homage may be helpful.
35. The Oath of Allegiance (see Canon C 13) is required to be taken by all those who are to be ordained, or appointed to any clerical office, in the Church of

England (though with special provisions for those coming from overseas and those who desire to affirm rather than to swear): 'I, AB, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God.' This oath reflects the constitutional relationship, referred to in shorthand as 'establishment', between the Church of England and the Crown. However, it is noteworthy that it is framed in general terms and that the scope of allegiance is bounded by law. A similar oath is required of those serving the Crown in other walks of life, for example: members of the Cabinet, Justices of the Peace, various judges, recorders, members of the Armed Services, and members of both Houses of Parliament.

36. In the Act of Homage, made to the Sovereign by every new diocesan bishop when 'kissing hands', the bishop acknowledges that he receives both the 'Temporalities' and the 'Spiritualities' of the see from the Sovereign. These terms are sometimes misunderstood, as though they transgressed the 'law of Christ' and created an issue of conscience. In fact both these terms have a restricted, technical meaning.

37. The 'temporalities' refer to the temporal aspects of the see or bishopric (the bishop's residence, income, etc). The only temporality for which the Crown is still responsible during a vacancy is the power of patronage to livings of which the bishop is patron by virtue of his see; the bishop's residence and any estates have been transferred to the Church Commissioners. 'Spiritualities', on the other hand, concern the authority to institute to benefices and to grant licences for the solemnisation of marriage without the publication of banns (together with the granting of commissions for ordinations to take place when the see is vacant). A diocesan bishop's 'spiritual' functions are normally delegated to another bishop during a vacancy. Thus the 'spiritualities' are not, as some might suspect, concerned with the authority to minister word and sacrament as a bishop, but comprise legal aspects of the bishop's authority in the oversight of the diocese.

THE JIC'S RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

38. The JIC as a whole has considered the Methodist Report and the response to it by its Church of England members and wishes to make some recommendations in relation to some of the issues raised. We believe that in order to enhance the implementation of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant there needs to be the possibility of change in some areas.

39. The Methodist members of the JIC are grateful to the Church of England members for a constructive response to the Report. They have found this response very helpful and would want to commend it to the Methodist Church, since it serves to correct some misconceptions and provides important information as a backdrop to the Covenant.

A greater sharing of opportunities for mission

40. The context for this first concern is that both our churches, in their own ways, are committed to engaging in a mission of the Christian gospel, at every level of the life of the population and at the heart of our culture. Therefore, the JIC wishes strongly to endorse and commend the suggestion that the Church of England should do more to share with ecumenical partner churches the huge pastoral opportunities and publicly recognised responsibilities for ministry and witness that it has as the established church. This sharing can be done at every level of the church's life. As far as Methodists and Anglicans are concerned, such sharing should become the norm as the Covenant is increasingly assimilated into the life of our two churches. It should be the 'default' position that our churches work together in every possible way and should act separately only when they feel compelled in conscience to do so (as the famous Lund Principle of the Faith and Order movement put it in 1952). This perspective is connected with the challenge, which the JIC is currently addressing, of working towards joint processes of discernment and of decision-making.
41. We therefore urge Church of England bishops and clergy, in particular, to work more closely than they already do with appropriate Methodist colleagues in many initiatives within the broad mission of the Church. In particular, ecumenical courtesy and good practice dictate that all ecumenical colleagues are involved at an early stage in the planning of national events and their regional and local civic equivalents, particularly those that take place in cathedral churches. On the other hand, initiatives originating with or being led by the Methodist Church (such as the marking of the third centenary of the birth of Charles Wesley in December 2007) should be shared in the same way.
42. We would also request the General Synod, the Diocesan Synods through the Bishops, the Methodist Conference and its connected bodies to build such ecumenical thinking into their processes so that close cooperation in those areas becomes the norm.
43. We now turn to the three 'controversial' areas where clarification has been provided earlier in this chapter.

Bishops in the House of Lords

44. The JIC recognises that reform of the House of Lords is not moving forward as originally envisaged in the Wakeham Report. However, now that the reform process has picked up momentum, and the possibility of further submissions has become available, we recommend that our churches should consult closely and should consider making a joint submission. This submission should reiterate the wish for wider and more diverse religious representation.
45. With regard to the Bishops' 'constituency' – who or what they represent in the House of Lords – the JIC is aware that a number of faith groups and churches see the bishops as making a valuable contribution in articulating the religious and moral concerns of significant sections of the population. This makes it all the

more vital that the bishops and those who brief them should consult with those who can speak from within other Christian and indeed non-Christian traditions. Even more important to the mission of the Christian Church in these islands, however, is that there should be a single identifiable representation of the Christian faith in the UK Parliament, as Christians of various traditions work closely with one another and stand together as far as possible on issues of public concern.

46. We are also conscious that, in their dioceses, the bishops play a significant role in local and regional affairs and that they see their representation in the Lords as a valuable opportunity to carry these concerns to the national level, rather than to represent narrow interests. The briefing and support that the bishops receive for their role in the Lords already reflects close ecumenical cooperation by the staff of our churches. In the same way, of course, Peers who are Methodists play a role that is broadly representative of Christian concerns and is not narrowly denominational. In addition to the existing co-operation with their fellow Christians who are Peers, and the consultations that take place between the staff of our churches, we encourage the bishops to consult more closely with other church leaders in their dioceses about issues on the parliamentary agenda.

The appointment of Bishops

47. We believe that, because of the Covenant between our two churches, it is now essential for the diocesan Vacancy in See Committee, which shapes the advice that the vacant diocese will give to its representatives on the Crown Nominations Commission, to consult with the Methodist leadership in the area, just as others involved in the process, on behalf of the Crown, already consult ecumenically for both diocesan and archdiocesan appointments. We recommend that this should become standard good practice and that a Methodist representative should be a member of the Vacancy in See Committee in the diocese that is seeking a bishop.

Supreme Governor

48. While individual Christians will hold various views about the constitution of the United Kingdom and the role of the monarchy within it, the churches can be thankful to God for the support and encouragement that the present Queen gives, by her words and deeds, to their work and witness. In the light of the information set out earlier in this chapter, we believe that her role is not something that should be a point of contention or even less of separation between our churches, but rather one that can help to bring us together in particular circumstances.

49. Regarding the particular issue of the control over doctrine and worship, as described above, the JIC is satisfied that both churches now enjoy a similar autonomy in these areas.

The Oaths of Allegiance and the Act of Homage

50. We do not feel that swearing or affirming the Oath of Allegiance to the Sovereign, as many lay Christians of different traditions (including Methodists) have to do in various walks of public service, is contrary to an ordained person's calling and obedience to the Church of Christ. The Act of Homage, which needs careful interpretation, is currently a matter for Church of England diocesan bishops and we do not feel a need to comment further on it at this time.

CONCLUSION

51. In our consideration of these issues, which arouse strong feelings among some, whatever position on these questions they may hold, we have had to recognise that there is a diversity of views within, as well as between, our two churches. We have taken the personal stories at the beginning of the Methodist Report Church, State and Establishment seriously and once again underline the point that Anglicans need to be aware of how they are sometimes experienced by Methodists in the context of establishment at all levels. Mutual consideration and courtesy are the minimum conditions for living out the Covenant.
52. The Joint Implementation Commission believes that questions about the relationship between the churches and the institutions of the state should be considered in the light of the imperative of unity in mission. As we have noted, the Lund Principle of 1952 laid it down that churches, committed to each other in the search for visible unity, should act separately only when compelled in conscience to do so. This suggests to us that the differences between our two churches in the way that they relate to the state and to the Crown – differences that are fairly and charitably discussed by the report to which we are now responding – should not prevent our working together under the Covenant in mission in general and evangelism in particular at every level of the life of our society. These differences should not be invoked by anyone as a pretext for holding back from closer collaboration in mission and do not prevent us taking further steps on the path of visible unity. We are both struggling with the challenge of how to relate to a fastchanging society and culture and how best to engage it in mission and evangelism: it would be unforgivable arrogance to imagine that we do not need each other in this daunting task.
53. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, our discussion is limited (with one exception, that was drawn to our attention) to the issues raised by the 2004 Methodist report Church, State and Establishment. We are aware that there are other aspects of the establishment of the Church of England that have not been raised. And we are fully conscious that what we have said is not the last word on this subject! We are convinced, nevertheless, that the visibility and audibility of

the Christian Church in the whole of public life is an essential condition of its effective mission. In conclusion we wish to underline the key recommendation of the original report that the Church of England should seek to share more actively with its ecumenical partners, particularly within the Covenant, the special opportunities for involvement, witness and proclamation that it enjoys. And we trust that, in such circumstances, the Methodist Church will rise to the challenge.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Church of England should do more to share the particular opportunities for mission that are available to it by virtue of its historic relationship with the state, and the Methodist Church should embrace these opportunities when they are offered.
- A Methodist representative should be involved in the deliberations of the Diocesan Vacancy in See Committee.
- The Methodist Church and the Church of England should consult together on the shape of a reformed House of Lords and consider making a joint submission to government.
- Anglicans and Methodists in both Houses of Parliament should work more closely together and, with MPs and Peers of other Christian traditions, should seek to present a united witness to Christian truths and values.

4 ENCOURAGING LAY MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

1. In recent years, mission in general and evangelism in particular have risen to the top of the agenda in both our churches. The increasing secularisation of culture, the drift away from the churches, and the symptoms of decline across a wide swathe of indicators of church life have concentrated the minds of Anglicans and Methodists alike. At the same time, the rise of interest in 'spirituality' in various forms (some of them rather commercialized and commodified), suggests that there is a spiritual hunger to which the Church needs to respond with the message of the gospel. The nature of our society, embracing many faiths and none, also presents a fresh challenge to the Church to live faithfully and openly, to enter into dialogue with others, to witness with confidence, to offer a Christian perspective on the issues of our day, and to act together in initiatives of healing, reconciliation and peacemaking. Altogether, our churches are seeking to become more mission conscious and mission-focussed in their strategies and priorities in order to ensure that the gospel is offered across as broad a front as possible in interaction with local communities and the life of civil society.
2. The contemporary challenge of mission, including evangelism, has coincided with a further flourishing of gifts and dedicated talent among lay people, which calls for recognition, training, and commissioning so that a wider range of lay ministries can take their place in the overall mission of the Church. In this context, it is important to be clear about what we mean by 'ministry' and about the various ways in which it may be recognised or 'authorised' by the Church. In this chapter, we first recall the definition of ministry offered in the Common Statement An Anglican-Methodist Covenant. We then go on to describe the wide range of lay ministries that have varying kinds of official status in our churches, before concentrating on two that are authorised at a national or connexional level: the ministries of Local Preacher and Reader.
3. In An Anglican-Methodist Covenant our churches affirmed 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.¹ Commitment to Mission and Unity outlined a number of steps on the way to visible unity, including 'growth in fellowship'.² Among the areas in which those sharing joint oversight were said to have a special responsibility to encourage growth in fellowship was 'increased provision for joint theological education for both lay and ordained'. Commitment to Mission and Unity also looked forward to 'the gradual integration of ministries' including the 'mutual recognition and

¹ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, para. 194, Affirmation 4.

² *Commitment to Mission and Unity*, para. 37(d); the so-called '37(d) Agenda'.

acceptance of authorised lay ministers'.³ The Joint Implementation Commission welcomes those initiatives that, despite some difficulties, have increased the provision of joint theological education for both lay and ordained and hopes that further developments will take place.⁴ The Commission has come to recognise, however, that we need to learn more about each other's different forms of authorised and recognised lay ministries so that we may understand their distinctive natures and emphases as well as their similarities.⁵

4. In recent years, the Methodist Church has developed increasingly flexible patterns of ministry, both ordained and lay. There are currently about 2,000 active Ministers and over 100 Deacons.⁶ Working alongside ordained ministries there are lay workers (paid and voluntary) and nearly 10,000 local preachers. The latter are lay people who are trained and accredited to lead worship and preach throughout the connexion. They conduct the majority of Sunday services in Methodist churches and almost all ministers have trained as local preachers before offering for ordained ministry. Meanwhile, in the Church of England, there are approximately 9,000 parochial stipendiary clergy, some thousands of nonstipendiary and active retired clergy, and hundreds of clergy in chaplaincies and sector ministries. Working with the clergy are 10,000 Readers and many lay pastoral assistants and evangelists (as well as Evangelists of the Church Army). Although the bulge in retirements is currently eroding the total number of stipendiary clergy, the number of ordinands entering training for both stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry has been rising over the past few years and recognised forms of lay ministry have been burgeoning.
5. Since the publication of the Common Statement, there have been further developments in the variety of lay ministries and the numbers of people exercising them. This has been particularly notable in the context of mission,

³ Ibid., para. 37(e)(iii).

⁴ For the purposes of a later part of this chapter, it is worth noting that, in consultations involving the United Reformed Church, the Church of England, and the Methodist Church, these include the development of courses designed to meet the Methodist Council's training specification for Local Preachers which could, if they satisfy and continue to satisfy the Methodist Council's Validation Scrutiny Committee, be validated under SO 565A as alternative training programmes to the Local Preachers' training course, currently Faith and Worship.

⁵ It is important to note that the terms 'authorised' and 'recognised' are used differently in our two churches and that some ministries are recognised more informally than others. In the Methodist Church, the forms of authorised ministry are presbyter, deacon, lay worker, and local preacher.

⁶ We understand that, in the Methodist Church, there are between 30 and 40 supernumerary ministers listed as the pastoral contact for one or more churches but many more will be conducting worship and exercising presbyteral ministry in other ways.

including Children's, Youth, Family, and Community Workers, and the initiative taken by our churches together, including 'Fresh Expressions'. The Commission welcomes these developments and commends the ecumenical cooperation that is taking place both between our two churches and with others.

6. One of the points of discussion in the Commission has been to identify the authorised and recognised forms of lay ministry. The Common Statement records: The Conversations have found it helpful to distinguish ministry, first from everyday Christian discipleship, vital though that is, and second from instances of Christian service that individuals may from time to time choose for themselves. The Conversations have come to understand ministry in a more specific sense, namely as work, undertaken in the service of the Kingdom of God, that is actually acknowledged, either formally or informally, by the Church. All baptized Christians may be called to such a ministry. All Christians have received a charism (spiritual gift) of the Holy Spirit through their Christian initiation. Every limb or organ of the body of Christ has a vital role to play for the well-being of the whole body (1 Corinthians 12). All may be called to minister in one way or another. As their ministry is acknowledged and owned by the community, they are seen to act in the name of Christ and his Church.⁷
7. It also reminds us that: Baptism (in the context of full Christian initiation) lies at the root of all ministry. That is not to say that ministry is merely an expression of a baptismal mandate or that nothing is added to baptism in the commissioning of lay people and the ordination of clergy. ... Ministry is representative of Christ in his Church.⁸
8. The distinctions made in the Common Statement mark a development in our churches' understandings of lay ministry. Before identifying and exploring some of the different authorised and recognised lay ministries in our churches, it is important to recall some of those developments and to set lay ministries within the wider context of the corporate ministry of the Church and individual discipleship. In the 1980s, our churches did major pieces of work on what the World Council of Churches' document Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry called 'the calling of the whole people of God'.⁹
9. In the Church of England, a ministry much wider than the ordained has always been recognised and encouraged. The second collect for Good Friday in the Book of Common Prayer acknowledges that 'the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified' by the Holy Spirit, and (in the non-inclusive language of its day) prays for 'all estates of men in thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve thee.' This prayer is echoed in the Common Worship ordination rites, which locate the ordained ministry firmly in the context of the royal priesthood of the baptised.

⁷ An Anglican-Methodist Covenant, para. 140.

⁸ An Anglican-Methodist Covenant, para. 143-144.

⁹ Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, p. 20.

10. In 1985, a report of a working party of the General Synod's Board of Education, *All are Called: Towards a Theology of the Laity*, spoke of 'our ministries with family, friends and neighbours' and 'our "Monday morning" ministries' and 'our "Saturday night" ministries'.¹⁰ It seems that 'ministry' was being used here in a very general way to refer to all the daily acts of service which form part of every baptised Christian's discipleship. We do not demur from one of the report's conclusions that 'the primary location of the laity is in society at large',¹¹ but we are concerned that the teaching of the Prayer Book, that all members of the Spiritbearing Body of Christ are called to ministry in one form or another, is not distorted into the assumption, which now reveals itself in many ways, that it is for the individual to decide their ministry and for the church simply to accept what the individual has decided, even when that points to ordination or to authorised lay ministry.
11. The Methodist Church's response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry suggested that future discussion of ministry must give much greater prominence to the vocation of the whole people of God.¹² The Ministry of the People of God (1986 and 1988) stated the conviction that 'the church is most truly what God wants it to be when each Christian, with the help of the Christian community, discerns, develops and uses the Spirit's gifts in ministry.'¹³ The later version also affirmed that 'All church members are called by God to exercise Christian ministry in general, and also specific Christian ministries.' Lest these should be misunderstood to be solely or even primarily concerned with the 'internal' life of the Church, The Ministry of the People of God in the World (1990) asserted: 'the Ministry of the People of God in the World is both the primary and normative ministry of the church.'¹⁴
12. More recently, the Conference Statement on the Church, Called to Love and Praise (1999), said: The New Testament directs us to the priesthood of the body of believers, rather than the priesthood of every believer. This latter emphasis is not necessarily wrong, but it is much more individual-centred than the language of Scripture, which stresses the inter-dependence of believers. Nevertheless, in the churches to which Paul wrote, each person had a Spirit-endowed gift.¹⁵

¹⁰ *All are Called*, pp. 3f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹² 'British Methodist Response to the Lima Text (1985)' in *Statement and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Vol. 2 (1984-2000), p. 417, para. 2.4.0.

¹³ Para 035 in both versions of the report. It is interesting to note that in the 1986 edition paragraph 035 is headed 'All Christians are ministers' whereas in the 1998 edition, it is headed 'All Christians share in the ministry of Christ'.

¹⁴ From 'A letter to Conference from Members of the Commission' and quoted in *Called to Love and Praise* (para. 4.5.4).

¹⁵ CLP, para. 4.5.3.

13. Lay people are involved in the ministry of oversight, the function of ensuring that the church remains true to its calling.¹⁶ A report to the Methodist Conference of 2005 – The Nature of Oversight – recalled that ‘An important feature of the Methodist understanding of oversight since the time of Wesley is ... that it has always been corporate in the first instance and then secondarily focused in particular individuals and groups (lay and ordained).’¹⁷
14. At the heart of oversight in the Methodist Church is the Conference, a representative body of lay people, deacons, and presbyters. It authorises people and groups to embody its oversight in the rest of the connexion. It does so through formal bodies (eg, the Pastoral Committee of a local church, the Circuit Meeting, and the Methodist Council) and particular office holders (eg, church stewards, district officers, and the Vice-President of the Conference). It also does so through ministers (presbyters) stationed by the Conference to exercise pastoral responsibility and, when appointed to circuits, pastoral charge.¹⁸
15. Some of the above quotations point in the direction of a more all-embracing definition of ‘ministry’ and it is significant that they do. The consequence of this ‘broadening’, however, is that, as already noted, ‘ministry’ needs to be more carefully defined if it is not simply to become another word for Christian discipleship and so lose its distinctive meaning. It is also important that it does not lose its anchor in the New Testament’s use of diakonia to refer to a mandated mission, an act of responsible agency on behalf of one who sends. In response to this situation and as noted above, we adopt the sense in which the Common Statement uses ministry, namely ‘work, undertaken in the service of the Kingdom of God, that is actually acknowledged, either formally or informally, by the Church’, rather than decided by the individual on their own initiative. The Church of England’s Hind report (which is quoted in the Methodist Church’s Time to Talk of God) also distinguishes ‘ministry’ from discipleship: The primary focus of discipleship is the service of God and his mission in the world. In this it differs from ministry, with its key focus on nurture, development and leadership of the Church. The tendency in our Church culture is to see ministry as a normative category for discipleship. This often leads to a Church-oriented approach to discipleship.¹⁹
16. In the remainder of this ‘chapter’ the definition of ministry offered in the Common Statement (and reproduced in full above) will serve as the basis for the discussion.

AUTHORISED AND RECOGNISED LAY MINISTRIES

¹⁶ The Nature of Oversight, para. 1.7.

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 2.22.

¹⁸ Ibid., paras 2.18-2.27.

¹⁹ Time to Talk of God, p. 67.

The Methodist Church

17. In the Methodist Church, there are many ministries that are usually, and sometimes exclusively, exercised by lay people. The vast majority of Vice-Presidents of the Conference, for example, have been lay people, but the office is also open to Deacons. Similarly, the vast majority of Local Preachers are lay people but a Deacon may have been a Local Preacher before ordination or become one subsequent to it.²⁰ Class Leaders and Pastoral Visitors may be ministers, deacons or probationers,²¹ but the overwhelming majority are lay. Many of these ministries are authorised by the Deed of Union and/or the Standing Orders of the Conference.²² Over recent years, however, fewer have been listed in Standing Orders and local churches, circuits, and districts have been given greater flexibility to appoint the officers they consider best serve their purposes.²³

18. The Methodist Worship Book (MWB) provides authorised services for the admission or (annual) commissioning of some of the lay ministries authorised by Standing Orders.²⁴ The Commissioning Services for Pastoral Visitors and Class Leaders, Workers with Children and Young People, and Worship Leaders, have a shared structure. In the Preface there are three pairs of responsive sentences loosely based on 1 Corinthians 12 (especially verses 5 and 27):

We are the Body of Christ:

each of us is a member of it.

There is one ministry of Christ:

in this ministry we all share.

There are different ways of serving God:

it is the same Lord whom we serve.

²⁰ In the Methodist Church, deacons are able to be involved in the leading of worship but, unless they are also Local Preachers, not preaching (See the Methodist Diaconal Order's Mission Statement, in *What is a Deacon?*, para. 8).

²¹ See SO 630(1A).

²² E.g. the office of Vice-President of the Conference is established by clause 27 of the Deed and matters relating to designation and election, support, and membership of a District Synod in Standing Orders 110, 113, and 410 respectively; matters relating to Workers among Children and Young People do not appear in the Deed, but are dealt with under Standing Orders 660-662.

²³ See, for example, SOs 642(1), 551(1), and 403(1).

²⁴ The Admission of Local Preachers (MWB, pp. 329-335); The Commissioning of Lay Workers (MWB, pp. 336-343); The Annual Commissioning of Pastoral Visitors and Class Leaders (MWB, pp. 344-346); The Annual Commissioning of Workers with Children and Young People (MWB, pp. 347- 349); and The Commissioning of Worship Leaders (MWB, pp. 350-352). The Commissioning of Evangelists is not in MWB because it was not authorised by the Conference until 2003.

19. This response locates these recognised lay ministries within the ministry of the whole Church. The text of the Annual Commissioning of Pastoral Visitors and Class Leaders continues: It is the tradition of the Methodist Church that within our community we offer pastoral care to one another. In order that this ministry may be fulfilled, the Church appoints Pastoral Visitors and Class Leaders. It is their privilege and responsibility, in the name of Christ and on behalf of the whole Church: to pray regularly for those in their care; to share in their joys; and to give comfort and support in time of sorrow and need.²⁵
20. The Induction of the Vice-President of the Conference does not appear in MWB, but is printed in the Agenda of the Conference each year. In it, the newly appointed Vice-President undertakes to exercise leadership so that 'all the members of the Church may be encouraged in the exercise of their ministry, strengthened in their witness, and kept alive to their charge'.
21. The various ministries have different patterns of appointment, training, and authorisation or recognition. Matters relating to Local Preachers, for example, including admission to the office, are the responsibility of the Circuit through its Local Preachers' and Circuit Meetings. It is, however, a connexionally recognised office: the training programme is approved by the Methodist Council,²⁶ persons retain Local Preacher status while they remain members (even if they are no longer able to lead worship and preach), and are received as Local Preachers on removal from one Circuit to another.²⁷
22. Lay Workers and Lay Evangelists (including Evangelism Enablers) may be appointed by Circuits or Districts where pastoral or evangelistic work, or administrative work relating to furthering and co-ordinating the mission of the church, cannot appropriately be done solely under other offices.²⁸ There is an increasing number of Lay Workers in the Methodist Church and they all act under the direction and pastoral care of either the Superintendent or Chair of District. Although the Conference of 1998 authorised 'The Commissioning of Lay Workers' as part of The Methodist Worship Book, in 2003 it authorised a service specifically for 'The Commissioning of Evangelists', whether lay or ordained.
23. Class Leaders and Pastoral Visitors, Workers among Children and Young People, and Worship Leaders are all appointed by Church Councils. Training

²⁵ There is an equivalent statement in 'The Annual Commissioning of Workers with Children and Young People': 'When children are baptized, we promise so to maintain the Church's life of worship and service that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian nurture of children and young people is thus the responsibility of the whole Church. In order that this ministry may be fulfilled, the Methodist Church appoints Workers with Children and Young People' (MWB, p. 348).

²⁶ SO 564A(3).

²⁷ SO 563(5).

²⁸ SO 570(1)(c) and SO 405.

material for each ministry is produced connexionally by the Methodist Church²⁹ or, in the case of Workers among Children and Young People, ecumenically.³⁰ None of these ministries is 'transferable' in the same sense that local preaching is but, in the case of those who are accredited within the area of work among children or young people, 'the fact of this accreditation shall be noted when the person is transferring from one Local Church to another.'³¹ Appointment to the first two of these ministries is annual, but not subject to Methodism's so-called 'six-year rule'.³² Appointment as a Worship Leader is subject to triennial review.³³ Church Councils may also appoint lay persons to lead services of Extended Communion.³⁴

24. Circuit Stewards are appointed by the Circuit Meeting, Church Stewards by the General Church Meeting,³⁵ and Communion Stewards by the Church Council. Training material is produced connexionally for Church Stewards³⁶ and has been for Communion Stewards. One of the Chair of District's responsibilities (with the District's Lay Stationing Representative³⁷) is to arrange appropriate preparation for all ministers and circuit stewards who are to be involved in the process of the extension and/or invitation of ministers.³⁸

²⁹ Prepared to Care: Pastoral Care and Visiting (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 1996) and other resources for Class Leaders and Pastoral Visitors and the Worship Leaders Training Pack for Worship Leaders. Neither of these is, however, prescribed by a connexional body. See also Encircled in Care (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 2007).

³⁰ Core Skills for Children's Work (for workers among children) and 'Spectrum' (for workers among young people).

³¹ SO 661.

³² No person may hold the office of Church Steward, Church Treasurer, or Secretary of the Church Council or Pastoral Committee, or be elected to the Church Council from the General Church Meeting for more than six successive years (SO 607 (3)) unless this would make it impossible adequately to fill that office (SO 607 (4)). There are equivalent Standing Orders for certain Circuit officers (see SO 504).

³³ SO 682 (4).

³⁴ SO 609. Such appointment is not required if a person has already been authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper by the Conference or, in emergency, the President of the Conference.

³⁵ This is a meeting of the local church which is not required in certain circumstances, in which case, the Church Stewards are appointed by the Church Council.

³⁶ Chris Kitchen and Roger Walton, Don't Panic: The training pack for church stewards (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House).

³⁷ Each District has a Lay Stationing Representative who works with the Chair of District on stationing matters.

³⁸ See 'Guidance on the Stationing of Ministers and Deacons', in CPD, Book VI, Part 2, Section 1, para. B (5).

25. District, Circuit, and Church Treasurers are appointed by the District Synod, Circuit Meeting, and Church Council respectively. A recent development in some Districts is the appointment of lay or diaconal Synod Secretaries.
26. In the past, Youth Officers were appointed by a number of individual or groups of Districts. This office has been superseded by the more comprehensive role of the Training and Development Officers.³⁹ Youth Workers, Youth and Community Workers, Workers with Children, and Other Lay Employees may be appointed by Circuits or Churches. The latter are also sometimes appointed by Districts.
27. There are, of course, many other lay ministries in the Methodist Church which are not referred to in Standing Orders. They are 'acknowledged and owned by the community', and those who exercise them – including local Women's Network officers, musicians of various kinds, Bible study and house group leaders, and committee officers – 'are seen to act in the name of Christ and his Church'.

The Church of England

28. In the Church of England, the Canons make provision for the following Lay Officers: Churchwardens, Sidesmen or Assistants to the Churchwardens, Parish Clerks or 'other officers' (eg, sexton, vergers), Readers, and Lay Workers (which specifically includes those admitted to the office of 'Evangelist' – eg, Church Army Officers).
29. Churchwardens are, under Canon E1, officers of the diocesan bishop and are admitted by the bishop or his representative (usually the Archdeacon) at the annual Visitation Service held in each Deanery. Sidesmen and Sideswomen are assistants to the Churchwardens and are appointed under Canon E2 by the annual parochial church meeting or, in certain circumstances, by the Parochial Church Council. The minister and parochial church council may, under Canon E3, appoint Parish Clerks, Sextons, Vergers and other officers required in the parish. Canonical provision is also made under Canon B12(3) for the bishop to authorise lay people to 'distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper' at services held in church and, if requested, to those who wish to receive Communion but are prevented from attending a celebration by sickness or infirmity.
30. Readers and Lay Workers are selected and trained according to nationally agreed criteria. Their training and office is recognised throughout the Church of England, and they can minister in any diocese in which the Bishop is prepared to grant them a Licence. While the service for the admission and licensing of Readers may vary among the dioceses, and is not specifically provided for in Common Worship, the declarations which a Reader needs to make before being

³⁹ Most Training and Development Officers are lay people, but ordained persons may hold this office.

admitted 'by the delivery of the New Testament' (Canon E5.5) and/or licensed are set out in Canons E5 and E6.

31. In recent years, in response to the perceived needs of the Church's mission, several dioceses have developed diocesan schemes of lay ministries and the bishop has authorised people as 'Pastoral Assistants', 'Parish Evangelists' etc. Selection and training for these ministries is ultimately the responsibility of the bishop and his diocesan staff. Because the nature of and authorisation for these ministries is specific to the diocese, they are not necessarily transferable if the candidate moves to another diocese. In practice, those who exercise such ministries are likely to find a similar opportunity to exercise their gifts and calling in a new context. Most dioceses are encouraging the development of Ministry Teams at the local (Parish/benefice) level in which these authorised ministers work with the minister in the care and mission of the parish(es). In some cases, particularly where the team is commissioned corporately it may include other lay leaders in the parish, as well as those authorised by the bishop.
32. A third group of lay ministries in the Church of England has parochial authorisation. Those involved in such ministries would receive appropriate training and might receive some form of episcopal commissioning or licence. They would be appointed by the parish priest and /or the Parochial Church Council, but they would not be formally authorised to serve outside the parish or parishes involved. Such ministries include youth and children's workers, musicians, house group leaders, community workers, and parish administrators.

SOME COMPARISONS

33. In our conversations we have learnt not to come to hasty conclusions about the equivalence of ministries in our two churches. Both the Church of England and the Methodist Church make provision for Lay Workers, for example, but there are far fewer in the Church of England than in the Methodist Church.⁴⁰ Likewise, similar roles are sometimes handled in very different ways. Both our churches, for example, provide for lay people to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion during celebrations of the sacrament and afterwards at home or hospital with elements consecrated during the celebration. In the Church of England, all such people must be authorised by the bishop. In the Methodist Church, those assisting with the distribution at a celebration may simply be invited to do so by the presiding minister, whilst those leading services of 'Extended Communion' must be appointed by the Church Council.⁴¹

⁴⁰ At the beginning of 2006, there were 120 Lay Workers on the central pay roll of the Church of England (with probably a few more being paid by dioceses or parishes) whereas there were 564 in the Methodist Districts in England.

⁴¹ In the Methodist Church services of 'Extended Communion' are 'acts of worship in homes (including nursing and retirement homes), hospitals and hospices during which elements set aside at a previous celebration of the Lord's Supper are received' (SO 609(1)). See *MWB*, pp. 229-234 for the text of the authorised service and SO 609(1) for the terms of the appointment. In the Church of England services with Communion by Extension are for congregations in authorised places of worship in which Holy Communion has not been celebrated. During such a service, the congregation may receive 'communion by extension' from a church where Holy Communion has been celebrated. The minister who leads the service

34. There are also differences in our churches' requirements for what many would consider parallel ministries. So, for example, both Church Stewards and Churchwardens must be eligible for charity trusteeship and not have committed certain serious offences. Church Stewards must be members of the local Methodist Church (or supernumerary ministers or deacons stationed in the Circuit), shall, therefore, be baptized, and should normally be at least 18 years old. Churchwardens must be baptized, be members of the Church of England through the electoral roll of the parish,⁴² be an 'actual communicant', and be at least 21 years old. Usually, therefore, a Churchwarden will either have been confirmed or be desirous of being confirmed by a bishop. Nevertheless, an 'actual communicant' may also be a communicant member in good standing of another Church which subscribes to the doctrine of the Trinity.

35. Distinctions also exist between the ways in which lay ministries are authorised in our churches. In the Church of England the bishop has the authority to admit to specific offices in the church, eg, Churchwardens, Readers, and Lay Workers, and to license Readers, Lay Workers and, where such schemes exist, Pastoral Assistants, etc to serve in a particular parish or parishes. The licence gives the lay minister authority to exercise the ministry described, and may list what he or she is permitted to do, particularly where canonical provision is made. Other appointments are made by the PCC or Parish priest and authorised locally under their guidance, eg, youth workers, organists etc. In the Methodist Church lay ministries are authorised by the Conference, either by making appointments itself, eg, the Vice-President of the Conference, or by regulating other appointing bodies, eg, the Methodist Council, the District Synods, the Circuit Meetings, and the Church Councils.⁴³ These bodies, which are made up of both lay and ordained persons, appoint people, or approve their admission to the various lay ministries. As noted above, most of the special services in the Methodist Worship Book for lay ministries are commissioning services. When, however, the Local Preachers' Meeting is satisfied that a person on trial should be admitted as a Local Preacher, it recommends this to the Circuit Meeting, which, if it agrees, shall approve the person on trial for admission.⁴⁴ The admission takes place in a circuit service, normally a Communion Service, at which the Superintendent Minister should normally preside.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it is not the Superintendent who admits to office. The 'we' in the phrase 'we now admit to the office and ministry of a Local Preacher' is understood to refer to the congregation in the circuit service acting both in the name of the Circuit Meeting

must have been specifically authorised to do so by the bishop and will normally be a deacon, Reader, or lay worker licensed under Canon E7. See *Public Worship with Communion by Extension* (Lonson: Church House Publishing, 2001) for the text of the service and the Guidelines issued by the House of Bishops.

⁴² See *An Anglican Methodist Covenant*, para. 129-131 though it should be noted that it has been pointed out that these paragraphs are not an accurate description of the Methodist Church's position: paragraph 129 could be read to suggest that there are various legitimate meanings of the word 'membership' in the Methodist Church whereas its meaning is plain from clause 8 of the Deed of Union and Section 05 of Standing Orders.

⁴³ See *The Nature of Oversight*, para. 2.10.

⁴⁴ SO 566(5).

⁴⁵ *MWB*, p. 329, note 1.

and as representatives of the Conference in the Circuit. This latter point is made through the reading and presentation of a letter from the President of the Conference.⁴⁶

36. It is important to recognise that there are many opportunities for members of both our churches to exercise a lay ministry in the other, eg, choir director and youth worker, as well as members of both our churches exercising lay ministries alongside each other in joint activities, eg, a holiday or after-school club for children. There are other lay ministries, however, which require members of either of our churches to undergo some further form of initiation within the other church. If a Methodist Church wished to appoint a confirmed member of the Church of England as a Pastoral Visitor, for example, that person would need to become a member of the Methodist Church before the appointment could take place. Conversely, if a bishop wished to license a member of the Methodist Church as an accredited Lay Worker (including as an evangelist), that person would need to have been confirmed by a bishop.⁴⁷

READERS AND LOCAL PREACHERS

37. In the light of what was said in the Common Statement, the debates in our two churches, and subsequent representations to us, we focus the rest of this discussion on two ministries which are nationally/connexionally authorised, are internally transferable within the structures of each of our two churches and are very significant in both: Readers and Local Preachers.
38. Readers are lay persons, male or female, who are baptised, episcopally confirmed, and regular communicants of the Church of England who, being of good life, sound in faith, and well fitted for the work of a Reader, have made declarations of faith and of canonical obedience to the bishop, and been admitted to the office of Reader and licensed by the bishop to perform any duty or duties appropriate to that office.⁴⁸ Such persons must possess 'a sufficient knowledge of Holy Scripture and of the doctrine and worship of the Church of England as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer', be able 'to read the services of the Church plainly, distinctly, audibly, and reverently', and be 'capable both of teaching and preaching'.⁴⁹
39. The duties for which a Reader may be licensed are laid down in Canon E4(2): It shall be lawful for a reader:

⁴⁶ *MWB*, p. 335, para. 20.

⁴⁷ Canon E7(1)(a). This would include evangelists since Canon E7(2) states that a man or woman admitted to the office of evangelist is thereby admitted as a lay worker of the Church. A Lay Worker in the Methodist Church must be either a member of the Methodist Church or 'a practising member in good standing of another Christian church' and 'have given undertakings that during the currency of the appointment he or she will not do or say anything contrary to the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church and will abide by its discipline' (SO 570 (2)).

⁴⁸ Canons E4(1) and E5(2) and (4).

⁴⁹ Canon E5(3).

- (a) to visit the sick, to read and pray with them, to teach in Sunday school and elsewhere, and generally to undertake such pastoral and educational work and to give such assistance to any minister as the bishop may direct;
- (b) during the time of divine service to read Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution), to publish banns of marriage at Morning and Evening Prayer (on occasions on which a layman is permitted by the statute law so to do, and in accordance with the requirements of that law), to read the Word of God, to preach, to catechise the children, and to receive and present the offerings of the people;
- (c) to distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people.

40. A bishop may also authorise a Reader: to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation but only, in each case, with the goodwill of the persons responsible and at the invitation of the minister of a parish or an extra-parochial place within the meaning of section 1 of the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972.⁵⁰
41. The distinctive ministry of Local Preachers is focused in leading God's people in worship and preaching the gospel. They are members of the Methodist Church and, therefore, baptized, called of God, to be worthy in character, to lead worship and preach with knowledge, conviction and competence, preach nothing at variance with the Methodist Church's doctrines, and to be available for an appropriate number of appointments each quarter. In order to sustain their ministry, sharing in fellowship and training are duties alongside attendance at public worship and receiving Holy Communion. They also share in the oversight of worship (including doctrinal matters): this is done through the Local Preachers' Meeting (which it is their duty to attend) and, if a Consultation on Worship is constituted, in the local church of which they are members.⁵¹
42. Readers, then, may and often do have an explicitly pastoral and educational role in addition to the role they share with Local Preachers in the conduct of worship and preaching. Local Preachers may be Class Leaders or Pastoral Visitors and they may assume an educational/nurture role, but they will usually do so by being appointed to other lay ministries. Local Preachers may conduct funerals and marriages, though how many do so is not known; it is probably fair to say that the vast majority are conducted by ministers with some being conducted by deacons and probationers.⁵² Normally, baptism is administered by a minister or by a ministerial probationer but, in certain situations, Local Preachers (as well as deacons and diaconal probationers) may administer the sacrament with the approval of the Superintendent.⁵³

⁵⁰ Canon E4 (2A).

⁵¹ SO 568.

⁵² Unlike the Church of England, no one in the Methodist Church is able to register marriages *ex officio*. Managing trustees of buildings registered for solemnizing Marriages therein appoint Authorised Persons (ordained or lay) to fulfil this role.

⁵³ SO 010A(2).

Shared ministry: Local Preachers and Readers

43. In the Commission's interim report, *In the Spirit of the Covenant* (2005), the difference between 'shared' and 'interchangeable' ministry was discussed in the context of ordained ministry.⁵⁴ There it was explained how, although 'there is a fundamental relationship of communion (koinonia) between all who have been baptised', 'there are degrees to which this communion in Christ is visibly realised and expressed.'⁵⁵ This entails 'corresponding degrees of mutuality in ministry' which 'reflect the various ways that the churches order their life, especially their oversight, and the rules under which they operate.'⁵⁶ There is in lay ministries, as in ordained, a spectrum of possibilities, from informal collaboration, through shared ministry, to interchangeable ministry. The implications of this for Readers and Local Preachers are different in our two churches.
44. In the Church of England, Canons B 43 (governing general ecumenical relations) and B 44 (dealing solely with Local Ecumenical Partnerships) provide for the sharing of both lay and ordained ministries. The provisions of those Canons for ordained ministries were discussed in our first Interim Report. Here we look at them in the context of Local Preachers. Canon B 43 reads:
1. (1) A minister or lay person who is in good standing of a Church to which this Canon applies and is a baptised person may, subject to the provisions of this Canon, be invited to perform all or any of the following duties:
- (a) to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany;
 - (b) to read the Holy Scriptures at any service;
 - (c) to preach at any service;
 - (d) to lead the Intercessions at the Holy Communion and to lead prayers at other services;
 - (e) to assist at Baptism or the Solemnisation of Matrimony or conduct a Funeral Service;
 - (f) to assist in the distribution of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people at the Holy Communion; if the minister or lay person is authorised to perform a similar duty in his or her own Church.
45. Local Preachers are in good standing of the Methodist Church (one of the Churches to which the Canon applies) and are baptised persons.⁵⁷ They are explicitly authorised to perform duties similar to (a), (b), (c), and (d). Local Preachers are not explicitly 'authorised' to 'assist' at Baptisms or Marriages, but in the Methodist Church could be invited to do so.⁵⁸ As noted above, in the Methodist Church, people are 'authorised' to assist in the distribution of the holy

⁵⁴ *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, 7.4.

⁵⁵ *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, para. 7.4.1.

⁵⁶ *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, para. 7.4.2.

⁵⁷ A Local Preacher is, by definition, a member of the Methodist Church and is, therefore, a baptized person.

⁵⁸ As noted above, there are circumstances in which Baptism may be administered by Local Preachers and marriages and funerals conducted by them. In the Church of England, to assist at a Baptism could involve any part of the service other than the Baptism itself and to assist at the Solemnization of Matrimony could involve any part of the service other than the vows, the giving and receiving of the rings, the joining of the hands, and the declaration of the marriage.

sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people at the Holy Communion by invitation of the presiding minister. The survey for His Presence Makes the Feast revealed that

46. Assisting with the distribution of the bread and wine was reported by a third of respondents 'occasionally' or 'sometimes' and a further third 'always'. Those who assisted were most likely to be a Communion Steward or Local Preacher, followed by a Church Steward, another minister and then a lay worker, unspecified other and deacon.⁵⁹
47. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that Local Preachers could, subject to the provisions of the Canon relating to various permissions, be invited to perform all or any of the duties listed in Canon B 43 1 (1).⁶⁰ Their ministry could, therefore, be shared by and with the Church of England in a parish church or other place of worship in a parish, or in a cathedral church (including Local Ecumenical Partnerships).
48. In the Methodist Church, the Superintendent, in consultation with his or her colleagues, is responsible for making the circuit plan of preaching appointments.⁶¹ In this process, Readers of the Church of England may be invited to conduct worship and preach in Methodist churches. They, like anyone else appointed to conduct worship and/or preach in the Methodist Church, would not be permitted 'so to preach or expound God's Holy Word or perform any act as to deny or repudiate the doctrinal standards' of the Methodist Church.⁶² By accepting an invitation to conduct worship and/or preach from a Superintendent, the ministry of a Reader could be shared by and with the Methodist Church.
49. Although there is no requirement to do so, if this sharing became very significant for both the Circuit and a Reader, it may be appropriate for the Circuit to use the provisions of Standing Orders to enable the Reader to be 'authorised to serve as a local preacher'.⁶³ Where Readers have satisfactorily completed a course that has been validated in advance by the Methodist Council as an alternative training programme, they will only be required to fulfil any additional training

⁵⁹ *His Presence Makes the Feast*, para. 50; see also para. 51.

⁶⁰ In a parish church, apart from a service of ordination or confirmation, an invitation from the incumbent to do so requires, in the case of (f) and, on a regular basis, (a), (c) or (e) the permission of the bishop, in the case of (e) a request from the persons concerned, and in the case of (a), (c) or (f), the approval of the parochial church council. In the case of an ordination or confirmation, the invitation may be given only by the bishop and with the approval of the incumbent and the parochial church council.

⁶¹ SO 521(1).

⁶² Model Trusts 14(3). The responsibility for this rests with the managing trustees of the relevant Methodist church. The Methodist Church's doctrinal standards are set out in clause 4 of the Deed of Union.

⁶³ SO 566B(1) deals with the situation where there is a local ecumenical partnership scheme approved by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod and a lay preacher or reader of another church participating in the scheme (who is not a member of the Methodist Church) wishes to be authorised to serve as a Local Preacher in the Circuit. SO 566B(2) deals with the situation where a lay preacher or reader of a church recognised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland wishes to be authorised to serve as a Local Preacher in the Circuit and is neither a member of the Methodist Church nor participating in an LEP. This Standing Order also deals with matters relating to an applicant not preaching anything at variance with Methodist doctrines, Safeguarding, membership of the Local Preachers' Meeting, complaints and discipline so far as it relates to Local Preachers, and the rights of a Local Preacher.

requirements as specified by the conditions under which the course was validated. Where such a validation has not been obtained, the Methodist Council may, in very exceptional circumstances and at its discretion, grant total or partial exemption from such a programme after consideration of an application made on a form obtained from the Connexional Local Preachers' Secretary, supported with a detailed reasoned statement approved by the Local Preachers' Meeting, and any additional information required by the Council.⁶⁴ Since different dioceses have different training procedures, it is not possible for us to comment on the detailed implications of this requirement. If a Reader were to be 'authorised to serve as a local preacher', this would be another way in which their ministry could be shared by and with the Methodist Church.

50.50. The Standing Orders of the Methodist Church also provide for the admission as local preachers of lay preachers and readers of other churches (including officers of the Salvation Army) who have become members of the Methodist Church.⁶⁵ People may be admitted into membership of the Methodist Church who are (baptised) members in good standing of any recognised Christian communion.⁶⁶ If such a person had not been confirmed, she or he would be confirmed and received into membership of the Methodist Church. Given the growing number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships and the signing of the Covenant, the number of members of the Church of England (including Readers) who seek to become members of the Methodist Church also is likely to increase.⁶⁷ To be admitted as a Local Preacher, the training procedures a Reader has undergone must meet the Methodist Council's training specification and the Local Preachers' Meeting must be able to satisfy itself as to the standing of the candidate in the Church of England and (if this were to be the case) the circumstances in which the Reader may have ceased to be licensed. The Local Preachers' Meeting will also need to be assured that the Reader will preach nothing at variance with Methodist doctrines, fulfils the Safeguarding requirements, and is known to other members of the meeting who can support the application to become a Local Preacher. In such a case, the Local Preachers' Meeting could recommend to the Circuit Meeting that it approve the admission of that Reader as a Local Preacher.⁶⁸ If a Reader were to be admitted as a Local Preacher, this would be an example of dual ministry in which

⁶⁴ SO 565B.

⁶⁵ See SO 566A. This SO deals with lay preachers and readers of other churches who have become members of the Methodist Church whilst maintaining 'membership' of the other church as well as those who have 'transferred' their 'membership' to the Methodist Church (i.e. left their previous church).

⁶⁶ See SO 052(1) and *Deed of Union* (8)(e)(i). Clause 8 of the *Deed of Union* was amended in 2001 to enable those who are (as well as those who have been) members of 'other Christian communions' (ie, members of churches other than Methodist ones) to be admitted into membership of the Methodist Church.

⁶⁷ The possibility of someone becoming a member of the Methodist Church whilst continuing to be a member of another communion is not, however, restricted to those in LEPs.

⁶⁸ SO 566A. If the training procedure the Reader had undergone did not meet the Methodist Council's training specification, it might be possible for a total or partial exemption from the prescribed training programme to be granted under SO 565B (as outlined above).

different, though overlapping ministries are exercised by one person in two spheres of oversight and authority.

51. If a Local Preacher wished to join the Church of England and become a Reader, the Canons currently require any person who has not been episcopally confirmed to 'be received [into the Church of England] by rite of confirmation' (Canon B 28).⁶⁹ The person would then meet the requirements of Canon E4 that a candidate for the ministry of a Reader must be 'baptised and confirmed' and satisfy 'the bishop that he [she] is a regular communicant of the Church of England'. This requirement of episcopal confirmation in order to be received into the Church of England appears to many not to reciprocate the process of a Reader becoming a member and a Local Preacher in the Methodist Church, and to cast doubt on the completeness of their initiation. In the light of the ecumenical agreements that the Church of England has made (including the Covenant itself), there can be no suggestion that the Canon should be interpreted as casting doubt on the Christian status of individuals. It is rather an expression of the way in which the Church of England has interpreted the importance of maintaining a church that is episcopally ordered as a sign of its continuity with the faith and mission of the apostolic community.
52. The requirement of episcopal confirmation, for those coming from non-episcopal churches, affects the Church of England's relations with those churches, including the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland through the Meissen agreement. The JIC is aware that the Meissen Commission has raised this matter formally with the Church of England. Without wishing to challenge in any way the Church of England's practice of episcopal confirmation for those who have never been confirmed, we hope that our conversations under the Covenant and the work already begun in the Church of England will lead to the removal of an obstacle to closer unity, one that causes misunderstanding and difficulty between the Church of England and a number of its ecumenical partners.
53. We are also aware that, while all Local Preachers are members of the Methodist Church, many have not been confirmed, since new members were not required to be confirmed until 1993. Before 1971, Confirmation was not practised in the Methodist Church and from 1971 to 1993 it was optional to confirm at the service of public recognition that followed admission to membership by the Leaders' Meeting or Church Council.
54. Given the growing number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships involving both our churches, there will also be those who are jointly confirmed and, therefore, received into the membership of the Methodist Church. Such people's experience of Church may have been mostly or wholly in an LEP and they may find it very difficult, even impossible, to say which is their primary denominational

⁶⁹ Persons who have been episcopally confirmed are received 'according to the Form of Reception approved by the General Synod' and such a form is provided in *Common Worship*.

allegiance. In this situation, some may seek to become a Local Preacher or a Reader because their gifts point towards one rather than the other of these different, though overlapping ministries. Others, however, could seek to become both a Reader and a Local Preacher rather than choosing between them. In the latter case, this would, once again, be an example of dual ministry in which different, though overlapping ministries are exercised by one person in two spheres of oversight and authority.

55. The JIC wishes to stress that, as a result of its detailed discussions, it does not regard interchangeability between Readers and Local Preachers as appropriate at present. As indicated above, there are significant differences between the two ministries, even though both involve the leading of worship and preaching. In addition, there are two very different structures of oversight, and different training schemes. The two offices are not 'equivalent'. We therefore wish strongly to encourage the sharing of these two ministries which is already possible.

CONCLUSION

56. In the light of Affirmation 4 of the Covenant,⁷⁰ we wish to challenge our two churches to maximise the possibilities for shared lay ministry that are already available under the rules of our churches.⁷¹ We believe that we have shown that these possibilities are far greater than many suppose. With regard to Local Preachers and Readers, we hope that local churches and circuits on the one hand and parishes in consultation with their bishop on the other, will enrich their worship through the involvement of Readers and Local Preachers, respectively. We hope that Readers will be invited to share in Methodist worship and that it will seem appropriate for some to be encouraged to apply to be authorised to serve as a Local Preacher in the Methodist Circuit. We further hope that, in order for this sharing to take place, the approvals required by the discipline of the Church of England will be readily made.⁷² Similarly, we hope that Local Preachers will be invited to share in Church of England worship, not only occasionally, but regularly, and that, when required, the approval of the bishop and of the Parochial Church Council, will be readily granted.⁷³

⁷⁰ Affirmation 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.'

⁷¹ Cf. *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, para. 7.4.6.

⁷² Canon B 43(6) requires that, before accepting an invitation to take part in a service in the Methodist Church, a Reader of the Church of England obtain the approval of the incumbent of the parish in which the service is to take place and, if it is to be on a regular basis, the approval of both the bishop of the diocese and the PCC of the parish. We note and welcome the fact that, in the context of the Covenant, some bishops have decided that they will normally grant the approvals that, under Canon B 43, they are required to give if some forms of sharing are to take place (see Appendix A to *In the Spirit of the Covenant*). We also note that under Canon B 43(8) parochial church councils may, where their approval is required, give it not only for particular individuals but also for classes of persons, generally and for unlimited periods as well as with limitations regarding duration or occasion.

⁷³ See Canon B 43(2).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- We recommend that any initiatives in mission, including evangelism, are, wherever possible, shared between our two churches (as well as with others) and that our lay and ordained ministries, as well as the gifts of all our people, are deployed to make those initiatives more effective.
- We recommend that the existing co-operation and sharing of resources between our two churches should, wherever possible, be extended to lay ministerial training.
- We recommend that the Regional Training Partnerships and regional Methodist Training Partnerships should, in consultation with the appropriate bodies within our churches, develop training programmes that, as far as possible, meet our churches' training specifications for Readers and Local Preachers.
- We recommend that our two churches maximise the practical opportunities for the sharing of lay ministry (particularly that of Reader and Local Preacher) that are already legally available under the rules of our churches.
- We recommend that the Church of England consider whether it can lift the current canonical requirement for the episcopal Confirmation of those seeking a ministry in that Church, who have been Confirmed in the Methodist Church.

APPENDIX

57. Applying Clause 14(2) of the Model Trusts and Standing Orders 521(1) and 566B in the context of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant in England

Introduction

58. In our previous report (In the Spirit of the Covenant, pp. 113-116) we reproduced the advice of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity for bishops on applying Canon B 43 in the context of the Covenant relationship. (Attention was drawn to the provisions of that Canon as they affect priests, deacons, deaconesses, Readers and lay workers who are invited to lead or take part in services in Methodist churches. It is important for Methodists to appreciate that, if a Reader were to be authorised to serve as a Local Preacher, the provisions of the canon would still apply and the necessary permissions would have to be obtained.) Here we set out some broadly corresponding advice for Methodists.

59. The Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church includes the following among its seven affirmations:

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.

60. It also includes the following among its six commitments:

3. We commit ourselves to continue to welcome each other's baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches.

Clause 14(2) of the Model Trusts and Standing Order 920(2)

61. Clause 14(2) of the Model Trusts provides for managing trustees, with the consent of the Superintendent (SO 920(2)), to hold occasional joint services or meetings on Methodist premises in which members of other Christian communions or bodies (including those who may not subscribe to the Methodist Church's doctrinal standards) participate. It also provides for any member of such a communion or body to officiate and to preach at any such joint service or meeting. Under Clause 14(3) of the Model Trusts, it is the responsibility of the managing trustees not to permit any person, at any service or meeting for religious worship held at or in any part of any premises comprised in the property, so to preach or expound God's Holy Word or perform any act as to deny or repudiate the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church.
62. In the context of the Covenant, it would be appropriate for more joint services and meetings to take place and that Readers and clergy of the Church of England be invited, subject to any approvals required under Canon B 43, to share in, officiate, or preach on such occasions.

Standing Order 521(1)

63. Standing Order 521(1) places the responsibility for making the circuit plan of preaching appointments on the Superintendent in consultation with his or her colleagues.
64. In the context of the Covenant, it would be appropriate for the Superintendent to invite more frequently Readers and clergy of the Church of England to accept, subject to the approvals required under Canon B 43, preaching appointments on the circuit plan.

Standing Order 566B

65. Standing Order 566B provides that a lay preacher or reader of a church other than the Methodist Church may be 'authorised to serve as a local preacher'. The lay preacher or reader may belong either to a church participating in an approved local ecumenical partnership scheme approved by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod or, if she or he is available for regular appointments on the circuit plan, to a church recognised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.
66. In the context of the Covenant, it would be appropriate for Circuit Local Preachers' Meetings to consider encouraging Readers of the Church of England to apply to be authorised to serve as Local Preachers.

67. Local Preachers' Meetings must consider such applications and, if (a) in the view of the Methodist Council the training procedures undergone by the applicant meet its training specification,⁷⁴ (b) the meeting is assured that the applicant will not preach anything at variance with the Methodist Church's doctrines, and (c) the applicant satisfies the Safeguarding requirements of the Methodist Church, it may recommend to the Circuit Meeting the acceptance of the application.
68. The Circuit Meeting may then authorise the applicant to serve as a local preacher in the Circuit, subject to and in accordance with Standing Order 566B(1) or 566B(2) and 566B(3). Such an authorisation would make the Reader, as someone authorised to serve as a Local Preacher, a member of the Local Preachers' Meeting, make her or him subject to certain duties (including the discipline of the Methodist Church in so far as it relates to Local Preachers, but so as to affect only their status in relation to the Methodist Church), and cause her or his name to appear in the Circuit Plan. The authorisation would cease if the Reader removed or if she or he ceased to be a Reader. It would also cease if, in the case of a Reader in an LEP, either the Church of England or the Methodist Church ceased to participate in the partnership, or, in the case of a Reader not in an LEP, she or he ceased to be available for regular appointments on the circuit plan.

Canon B43

69. In Appendix A to the Joint Implementation's interim report, In the Spirit of the Covenant, the advice of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity for diocesan bishops on applying Canon B43 in the context of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant was reproduced. In section E of that advice, attention was drawn to the provisions of that Canon as they affect priests, deacons, deaconesses, readers, and lay workers invited to lead or take part in services in Methodist churches.
70. It is important for Methodists to appreciate that if a Reader were to be authorised to serve as a Local Preacher, the provisions of the Canon would still apply and the necessary approvals obtained.

⁷⁴ The Methodist Council is able to accredit prior experience and learning and grant total or partial exemption from the prescribed training programme. It may, therefore, require a candidate successfully to complete part rather than all of the Local Preachers' training programme.

5 THE EUCHARIST: TWO THEOLOGIES OR ONE?

INTRODUCTION

1. During the process of reception of the Common Statement An Anglican-Methodist Covenant, various observations have been made and various questions asked about our churches' understandings and practices of Holy Communion. In this chapter, we outline what has already been said on these subjects in our first interim report (*In the Spirit of the Covenant*) and in the Common Statement, explore our common inheritance with regard to the theology of Holy Communion, outline the developments that have taken place since the end of the eighteenth century in both our churches, and then draw on two recently published documents, one from each of our churches, to see what the current emphases are in our understandings of Holy Communion. In our first interim report, *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, consideration was given to two of the 'differences of practice' between our two churches with regard to Holy Communion. These were identified in the Common Statement and were offered in the light of responses to and debates in both traditions. The first, emerging from paragraph 135 of the Common Statement, was an exploration of 'The Bread and Wine of Holy Communion'.⁷⁵ The second, emerging from paragraphs 137 and 163-165, consisted of two perspectives on 'Presidency at the Eucharist', one Anglican and one Methodist.⁷⁶
2. While we recognise that these differences of practice can express particular theological understandings, in this chapter we turn to a more wide-ranging examination of our churches' theologies of Holy Communion. We seek to show why we concur with the following claims made in the Common Statement: The richness of meaning in the Eucharist has produced different theological emphases. These are mostly differences within rather than between our churches.⁷⁷ And: It does not appear ... that there are fundamental differences of understanding between us.⁷⁸
3. The Common Statement recognised that: A vital dimension of full visible unity is the sharing of one baptism and the celebrating of one Eucharist. Anglicans and Methodists already recognise each other's baptisms and welcome each other's communicants to the Eucharist. This approach is grounded in theological agreement that goes back to our common roots and was affirmed in the unity

⁷⁵ *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, chapter 5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, chapter 6.

⁷⁷ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, para 134.

⁷⁸ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, para 138.

discussions of the 1960s. It has been reinforced by the ecumenical convergence reflected in the Lima statement Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) (1982).⁷⁹

4. It went on to say: As with baptism, so with the Eucharist, both churches responded positively to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. BEM affirmed (BEM E2-4) that in the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, instituted by the Lord, he grants communion (koinonia) with himself. God is acting in the mystery of the Eucharist, renewing the life of the Church, the body of Christ. In accordance with Christ's promises, each communicant receives assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the pledge of eternal life. The Eucharist eloquently proclaims the Lord's death until he comes. It is a great sacrifice of praise which, in anticipation of the ultimate redemption of creation (Romans 8:19-23), the Church offers on behalf of the whole creation. Christ unites the faithful with himself and, by virtue of his life, death and resurrection, includes their prayers within his own intercession.⁸⁰
5. The Common Statement noted that in 2001 the Methodist Church was 'working on its understanding of Holy Communion'⁸¹ and that the Church of England had earlier that year published the statement *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity*. In 2003, the Methodist Conference received a report from the Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee called *His Presence Makes the Feast*. The Conference commended the report to Districts, Circuits, and local churches for study and comment and, in 2005, received a further report from the Faith and Order Committee on those responses. It is important to recognise that *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity* and *His Presence Makes the Feast* are different kinds of documents and have a different purpose. Their difference of tone is reflected in our summaries later in this chapter. The former is a response by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England to *One Bread One Body*.⁸² The Anglican Bishops warmly endorsed much of the Roman Catholic Bishops' teaching but did not draw the same conclusions about Eucharistic sharing. They also corrected some misapprehensions about Anglican teaching and set out the positive teaching of the Church of England on the Eucharist.⁸³ *His Presence Makes the Feast*, was the first attempt by the Methodist Church in Great Britain to set down in detail what it believes and practises when its people gather to share bread and wine in Holy Communion.⁸⁴ The aim was to produce a report which would be genuinely 'owned' by the Methodist Church as a whole, and also offer fruitful material both for reflection within the Methodist Church and for those who seek to discover what Methodist

⁷⁹ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, para 121.

⁸⁰ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, para 132.

⁸¹ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, para 138.

⁸² *One Bread One Body: A teaching document on the Eucharist in the life of the Church, and the establishment of general norms on sacramental sharing* was published by the three Roman Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland in 1998.

⁸³ See *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity*, p vii-viii.

⁸⁴ *His Presence Makes the Feast*, para 13.

belief and practice is.⁸⁵ The purpose of the report, however, was not to set out the limits of what is acceptable: it describes 'how things are' rather than prescribing how things 'ought' or 'ought not' to be.⁸⁶

6. It is also important to recognise the different status of these two reports in our churches. The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity is, as noted above, a teaching document of the House of Bishops of the Church of England. On the other hand, the Conference 'received' His Presence Makes the Feast. This means that there was not 'any endorsement by the Conference of any statement, opinion or recommendation in the report.'⁸⁷

OUR COMMON INHERITANCE

7. The sources of eucharistic doctrine in the Church of England, up to the time of John and Charles Wesley, are dispersed in a number of places. First, there are the 'historic formularies'. These historical formularies are: the Book of Common Prayer, 1662 [BCP]; the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion (1571); and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons (1550/1662). The last of these is not particularly relevant to eucharistic theology, though it is significant that ordination always takes place in the context of the service of Holy Communion and that only an episcopally-ordained bishop or priest may preside at a eucharistic celebration of the Church of England. (Although the Church of England's historic formularies are not binding on the other churches of the Anglican Communion, they have generally been adopted or assimilated into the polities of those churches, so that there is a recognisably common Anglican theological position on many matters, including the Eucharist.)
8. Beyond these historic formularies, there is no substantial body of 'confessional' material. This means that what Anglicans believe about the Eucharist is stated minimally and indirectly. The fullest historical statement is, therefore, the rite for Holy Communion of the BCP, but this is, of course, expressed in liturgical and doxological language, not in doctrinal definitions. So we must say that the historic faith of Anglicans with regard to the Eucharist has been expressed in an indirect way according to the principle *Lex orandi lex credendi*: the rule of praying is the rule of believing. (Of course, this principle is not unique to Anglicanism.)

⁸⁵ *Agenda* (2000), p 166, para 5.

⁸⁶ *His Presence Makes the Feast*, para 16.

⁸⁷ Standing Order 131(17)(c). If the Conference adopts a report it 'endorses its recommendations or conclusions but not (without so stating) any reasons given for them' (Standing Order 131(17)(d)). The distinction between 'receive' and 'adopt' then is a very important though subtle one but in terms of the text of the body of most reports is of less importance than sometimes thought. It is worth noting, however, that in its report to the Conference in 2005, the Faith and Order Committee indicated that of the 41 responses to the report there was only one 'totally negative contribution'; the others expressed a sense of gratitude and approval for the report, a small number raising minor issues of criticism about statements or implied judgements within it (*Agenda* (2005), p 186).

9. This fairly sparse official material is supplemented by the writings of those Anglican divines who are generally regarded as classical exponents of Anglican theology: from Thomas Cranmer and John Jewel in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, through Richard Hooker at the turn of the sixteenth century, to Daniel Brevint (1616-95) and Daniel Waterland in the early eighteenth century – but they do not speak with one voice on all questions concerning the Eucharist.⁸⁸

John and Charles Wesley's eucharistic spirituality

10. John Wesley held a consistently high estimation of the Lord's Supper as 'the grand channel whereby the grace of His spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God'.⁸⁹ The Methodist revival was both evangelical and sacramental and Wesley believed that the Lord's Supper was both a converting and confirming or sanctifying ordinance.⁹⁰ Quarterly or at best monthly celebrations of Holy Communion were usual in the parish churches and a highly penitential piety deterred people from attending for fear of unworthiness. The Communion Services John Wesley conducted were noted for the large numbers attending and their sense of joy. Wesley himself adopted a rule of weekly Communion in London and Bristol and preached on 'The Duty of Constant Communion'.⁹¹ The sermon was written for his pupils in Oxford and, in a note added more than 55 years later, in 1788, John Wesley claimed 'not yet to have seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered.' The sermon addressed the neglect of the sacrament saying that those who are so much afraid of eating and drinking unworthily never think how much greater the danger is when they do not eat or drink at all, and seeking 'to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he (sic) can'. Much of John Wesley's teaching on the Lord's Supper, as on other matters, was expressed through the hymns of his brother, Charles.
11. The contribution that Charles Wesley made to eucharistic devotion through his hymns arises principally from Hymns on the Lord's Supper. It was first published in 1745 'with a preface concerning 'The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice' extracted from Dr Brevint'.⁹² It proved the most popular of all the Wesley hymn

⁸⁸ See D. Stone, *The History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (2 vols, London: Longmans, 1909), vol. 2; C.W. Dugmore, *The Mass and the English Reformers* (London: Macmillan, 1958); *idem.*, *Eucharistic doctrine in England from Hooker to Waterland: being the Norrisian prize essay in the University of Cambridge for the year 1940* (London: SPCK, 1942); K. Stevenson, *Covenant of Grace Renewed: A Vision of the Eucharist in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1994). Selected material in P.E. More and F.L. Cross (eds.), *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (London: SPCK, 1935), pp. 457-510 and G. Rowell, K. Stevenson, R. Williams (eds.), *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁸⁹ *Letters*, Vol 2, p 315 (Curnock ed, 1909), quoted in 'Children and Holy Communion' (1987), para 17 (p 139) and Kenneth Cracknell and Susan J. White, *An Introduction to World Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 177.

⁹⁰ See below.

⁹¹ Sermon Cl..

⁹² Daniel Brevint (1616-1695) published *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* in 1673 and became Dean of Lincoln in 1681.

collections, going through nine editions in John Wesley's lifetime. The hymns were intended to be sung during the distribution of communion and were arranged according to the sections of Brevint's treatise of 1673.⁹³ His Presence Makes the Feast, having acknowledged that, at least in some circles in Methodism, it is traditional to ascribe great importance to the 1745 collection, goes on to say that it is not a simple matter to ascertain is the degree to which the hymns have been used and their theology 'received' by the Methodist people in succeeding generations.⁹⁴ While there are more of the 166 in Hymns and Psalms than in some previous authorised hymn books, it is probably fair to conclude that 'in practice, the hymns of the Wesleys do not represent the contemporary understanding and piety of many Methodists'⁹⁵ On the other hand, as His Presence Makes the Feast suggest, 'if Methodism is to be faithful to the obligation to wrestle with its tradition, perhaps it should continue to take account of the hymns that undoubtedly present a very rich and nuanced understanding of Holy Communion. ... It could be argued that Methodism has a duty to commend their appreciation to the wider Christian world.'⁹⁶ There were six sections in the 1745 collection: (a) As it is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ, (b) As it is a Sign and a Means of Grace, (c) The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven, (d) The Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice, (e) Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons, and (f) After the Sacrament.⁹⁷ Few of the 166 hymns have survived into modern hymn books though at least one from each of the six sections appears in Hymns and Psalms, all but one of which appeared in The Methodist Hymn Book (1933) or Hymns and Songs (1969).⁹⁸

12. In summary: the early Methodist movement assumed the historic doctrinal and liturgical formularies of the Church of England. These were later slightly adapted

⁹³ In his study of the hymns, J Ernest Rattenbury wrote, 'Charles Wesley gives Brevint wings, and adds very significantly the confirmation of Methodist experience to Brevint's doctrine.' Interestingly for our purposes, Rattenbury says that in some of his verses, Wesley turns the devotional theology of an Anglican into the flaming Methodist Evangel without losing Anglican values.⁹³ In Rattenbury's view the doctrinal agreement of Brevint's prose and Wesley's poetry show no divergence anywhere.

⁹⁴ *HPMF*, para 72.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, para 73 and 75.

⁹⁷ Each section has the following number of hymns: (a) 27, (b) 65, numbered 28-92, (c) 23, numbered 93-115, (d) 12, numbered 116-127, (e) 30, numbered 128-157, and (f) 9, numbered 158-166.

⁹⁸ *HPMF*, para 73 states that there are only eight hymns from *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* in *Hymns and Psalms*; there are, in fact, seventeen, thirteen of which were in *the Methodist Hymn Book* and three of which were in *Hymns and Songs*. In terms of the sections of the 1745 collection they are: (a) 'Come, Thou everlasting Spirit' (*HLS*, 16; cf *HP*, 298 and *MHB*, 765), 'Lamb of God, whose bleeding love' (*HLS*, 20; cf *HP*, 550 and *MHB*, 181), 'God of unexampled grace' (*HLS*, 21; cf *HP*, 166 and *MHB*, 191); (b) 'O Thou who this mysterious bread' (*HLS*, 29; cf *HP*, 621 and *HS*, 58), 'Author of life Divine' (*HLS*, 40; cf *HP*, 596 and *MHB*, 764), 'Saviour, and can it be' (*HLS*, 43; cf *HP*, 541 and *MHB*, 760), 'Come, Holy Ghost, Thine influence shed' (*HLS*, 72; cf *HP*, 602 and *MHB*, 767), 'Jesu, we thus obey' (*HLS*, 81; cf *HP*, 614 and *MHB*, 761); (c) 'Happy the souls to Jesus join'd' (*HLS*, 96; cf *HP*, 816 and *MHB*, 818); (d) 'Victim Divine, Thy grace we claim' (*HLS*, 116; cf *HP*, 629 and *MHB*, 771), 'O God of our forefathers, hear' (*HLS*, 125; cf *HP*, 554 and *MHB*, 723); (e) 'See where our great High- Priest' (*HLS*, 129; cf *HP*, 622 and *HS*, 62), 'Jesu, we follow Thee' (*HLS*, 130; cf *HP*, 583 (in the Baptism section) and *HS*, 37), 'God of all-redeeming grace' (*HLS*, 139; cf *HP*, 727 and *MHB*, 566), 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost' (*HLS*, 155; cf *HP*, 791 and *MHB*, 574), 'Let him to whom we now belong' (*HLS*, 157; cf *HP*, 698 and *MHB*, 382); (f) 'How happy are thy servants, Lord' (*HLS*, 165; cf *HP*, 609). It is interesting to note that *Hymns and Songs* re-introduced some of Charles Wesley's hymns on the Lord's Supper to the Methodist people (see below).

for Methodist purposes by John Wesley. The expositions of eucharistic theology by Anglican divines, especially the teaching of Daniel Brevint, were also part of the legacy inherited by the first Methodists.⁹⁹ These sources, official and unofficial – together with the eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley – comprise our shared inheritance in this area of faith and worship.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND: MORE RECENT SOURCES

13. For the past century and a half, the teachings of the Lambeth Conferences of all Anglican bishops of the Anglican Communion have had moral and pastoral authority for the Communion. The report of the first Doctrine Commission Doctrine in the Church of England (1938), which has a substantial section on the sacraments, remains worth consulting. In addition, the ecumenical agreements that have been approved in principle by the Communion or by the Church of England's General Synod have authority. Particularly important among these agreed statements is the statement (1971) and elucidation (1979) on 'Eucharistic Doctrine' produced by the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, which was deemed 'consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans' by the General Synod in 1986 and by the Lambeth Conference in 1988.¹⁰⁰ The most recent statement from the Church of England is the House of Bishops' teaching document, *The Eucharist, Sacrament of Unity* (2001). The common statements that have led to the ecumenical agreements that the General Synod has entered into often have sections on the Eucharist and these have a degree of authority for the Church of England (e.g. Fetter Lane, Porvoo, Reuilly and the Anglican- Methodist Covenant).¹⁰¹

The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity¹⁰²

14. The bishops of the Church of England have recently restated some aspects of Anglican eucharistic doctrine in *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity* [ESU].¹⁰³ This document was prompted by a statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Britain and Ireland *One Bread One Body* [OBOB].¹⁰⁴ In issuing *One Bread, One Body* in 1998 the Roman Catholic Bishops Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland invited responses from ecumenical partners. This document is a clear exposition of the theology of the Eucharist in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. But it also lays down the Roman Catholic Church's rules for sharing Holy Communion with non-Roman Catholics.

⁹⁹ H.R.McAdoo, 'A Theology of the Eucharist: Brevint and the Wesleys', *Theology* XCVII (1994), pp. 245-255.

¹⁰⁰ ARCIC, *The Final Report* (London: CTS/SPCK, 1982).

¹⁰¹ See also C. Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁰² London: Church House Publishing, 2001

¹⁰³ *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity* (London: Church House Publishing, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ *One Bread One Body* (London: Catholic Truth Society; Dublin: Veritas Press, 1998).

In the course of the argument, One Bread One Body calls into question, directly or by implication Anglican celebrations of the Eucharist, Anglican orders of ministry, and the integrity of the Church of England as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

15. In essence, the Anglican bishops agreed with the theology of OBOB, but objected to some of the assumptions made about Anglicanism and strongly disagreed with the implications of the theology for eucharistic discipline. The House of Bishops sets out the teaching of the Church of England on the Eucharist, drawing on the official teaching and liturgies of the Church of England, especially the Book of Common Prayer (1662) and the new rites of Common Worship, and the ecumenical agreements that have received formal approval. The House particularly endorses five major affirmations of eucharistic theology.
16. First, the bishops affirm that there is a sacramental identification of the Eucharist with the one full and sufficient sacrifice of Christ. An identification that is effected by means of a sacrament makes the essential connection between the Eucharist and the death of Christ, while completely precluding any suggestion of a repetition of Calvary. This sacramental identification is strongly affirmed in the BCP ('who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death...'). It is equally affirmed in recent Anglican liturgies and in the received work of ARCIC which speaks of us being drawn into the movement of his self-offering.
17. Second, the bishops affirm that, in the Eucharist, Christians are united sacramentally through the Holy Spirit with Christ's perfect self-offering or sacrifice to the Father. Clearly, when in the Eucharist we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in thankful response to the sacrifice of Christ for us, we do this not in our own strength or merits, for (as the BCP says) we are unworthy to offer any sacrifice to God. We are enabled to do this solely because he unites us with himself in his perfect offering to the Father – an offering or oblation that consecrated his whole life and ministry to the Father's saving purpose and culminated in the Cross. Our self-offering is held within his. We have nothing to offer outside of his perfect and sufficient sacrifice. Both his sacrifice and our response receive sacramental expression in the Eucharist. This theme is strongly present in the BCP (cf. first post-communion prayer: '... mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving... and here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee... through Jesus Christ our Lord...') and in modern Anglican liturgies, as well as in the work of ARCIC.
18. Third, The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity affirms that sacraments are to be understood as 'instrumental signs' – in the context of faith – of divine grace. The language of sign and symbol is inevitable with reference to the sacraments, but

it should be taken as having a 'realist' intention, not in a reductionist sense. This means that the sacraments effect what they signify, and are means of grace, provided that the grace that is offered is not rejected. The Anglican formularies, while stressing the vital role of faith, are clear about the effect of the sacraments, by virtue of the promises of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

19. Fourth, the bishops affirm that, in the Eucharist, there is a true, real and personal communion of the Christian with Christ. This is, of course, the sine qua non of eucharistic theology and it is a truth that probably all historic traditions of the Church affirm. Without any shadow of doubt, the Anglican formularies and liturgical texts, as well as Anglican writers, ancient and modern, affirm a real union, communion and participation in Christ, in his body and blood. The Prayer of Humble Access in the BCP, for example, employs the Johannine image of indwelling, but far from 'spiritualising' this and making it ethereal, it refers in strongly physical language to the sanctifying of our bodies as well as of our souls. Richard Hooker typically uses the language of incorporation, participation, indwelling, 'mystical conjunction' and mystical, nuptial union.
20. Finally, the statement affirms that, in the Eucharist, Christians are in communion with the saints and the faithful departed. This is an awareness of a communion that is much wider than the present generation and spans this world and the next. While the BCP does not provide for invocation of the saints, and its doctrine of the communion of saints (*sanctorum communion*) is attenuated by comparison with some other liturgies, the truth of the communion of saints is nevertheless firmly present. The Prayer for the Church Militant blesses God 'for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear' and prays for 'grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom'. The Sanctus is prefaced with the words: 'Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name...'. And the Collect for All Saints Day addresses 'God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son...'.
21. Eucharistic theology in the Church of England has been in a continuous process of development since the Reformation. Thomas Cranmer (whose own views evolved and remain somewhat elusive and difficult to categorise) was responsible for two Prayer Books with rather different emphases, those of 1549 and 1552. The latter was slightly amended in 1559 and more extensively in 1662. The process begun by Cranmer culminated in the Book of Common Prayer, 1662, which reflected also developments from Richard Hooker to the Caroline divines. This was, of course, the Prayer Book of John and Charles Wesley. Anglican Eucharistic theology continued to develop after the BCP, 1662. Other emphases were developed by the Non-Jurors, but fed into the tradition. The modern Eucharistic liturgies of the Church of England, like those of the Methodist Church, draw on this inheritance and on patristic and ecumenical sources through the Liturgical Movement of the twentieth century. While there

has been undoubtedly a development and enrichment of the theology and liturgy in the Church of England's celebration of the Eucharist, it remains consonant with the fundamental insights of the Reformers and of the classical divines of the reformed English Church – the shared inheritance of Anglicans and Methodists.

22. The Wesleys were the heirs to this legacy and their eucharistic hymns made its theology and spirituality available to a wide audience. The eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley belong to all Christians and are a gift that binds Anglicans and Methodists together. In the anniversary year 2007, three hundred years since the birth of Charles Wesley on 18 December 1707, Methodists and Anglicans can celebrate his life and hymns together. The fact that we sing the same Eucharistic hymns (not only those of Charles Wesley, but those of William Bright, John Mason Neale and others) is a testimony not only to our shared history, but also to a body of shared theological insights that continues to shape the Eucharistic reflection of both our churches.

THE METHODIST CHURCH

23. Before looking at what the Methodist Church in Great Britain has said about its theological understanding of Holy Communion since Union in 1932, it is essential to look, if only briefly, at the way the Methodist movement evolved after the deaths of Charles and John Wesley and the legacy of those developments.¹⁰⁵ Although Union took place seventy-five years ago, the emphases and convictions of the separated Methodist churches are still to be found in particular congregations and are spread by those who have shared in them, including members, Local Preachers, Deacons, and Ministers.¹⁰⁶

24. The Conference of 1795 adopted the 'Articles of Agreement for General Pacification', setting out the conditions under which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper might be administered in Methodist chapels and to Methodist societies. In all cases, the arrangement required local consent, Conference approval, and the use of 'the form of the Established Church'.¹⁰⁷ This does not seem to have settled the matter immediately, because Conference noted the following year that 'we have had some complaints on both sides'.¹⁰⁸ The terms of the Plan of Pacification were adhered to, however, and by 1799 the Conference was approving the request of forty one societies to receive the Lord's Supper

¹⁰⁵ For a recent statement of this point in regard to the whole of British Methodism, see Brian E Beck, 'Reflections on Methodism Post-Wesley', *Epworth Review*, 34, no 2 (April 2007), pp. 6-16 (p 6). Beck points out that in the 60 years after Wesley's death the Wesleyans (the core body and legal successor to his movement) saw six major secessions and other smaller ones. After 1850 there was a gradual process of reintegration leading to reunions in 1907 (to form the United Methodist Church) and 1932 (to form the Methodist Church as it is today). The Independent Methodists and the Wesleyan Reform Union, however, remain separate (p. 7).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p 7. The JIC is most grateful to the Revd Dr Martin Wellings for providing the historical material that follows, up to footnote 46.

¹⁰⁷ *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences* (London, 1812), i, pp. 322-23 (1795).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48 (1796).

according to the regulations.¹⁰⁹ The 'Plan' required evening celebrations only, in order to avoid Methodist services taking place in 'church-hours', and although exceptions were allowed, it has been suggested that this set a pattern of Sunday evening celebrations following a preaching service and robbed Methodism of the Sunday morning eucharists characteristic of the early years of the movement.¹¹⁰

25. The Wesleys' advocacy of 'constant communion' remained the ideal of the Wesleyan Connexion in the first years of the nineteenth century. The Conference of 1806, for example, encouraged Methodists to receive 'at least once in every month'. Conference was concerned to ensure that proper forms of worship should be used (either the Book of Common Prayer or Wesley's abridgment) and that communicants should be members of society or those with a note of admission from the Superintendent. Bowmer notes that this regulation remained in place in Wesleyan standing orders until 1932.¹¹¹
26. Reading between the lines of Conference directives, it would seem that some Wesleyans were inclined to absent themselves from the Lord's Supper, or to leave the chapel immediately after receiving, 'leaving the officiating minister to conclude the service almost alone.' Conference responded with a stern Pastoral Letter in 1837, and with a directive in 1829 that every travelling preacher should 'preach expressly on the nature, obligation, and advantages of that holy Sacrament' on the last Sunday in November of that year.¹¹² It may be wondered whether some Wesleyans, experiencing the 'bread of life' in the preached Word and the 'promised presence' of Christ in the fellowship of the society and the class, found the sacrament superfluous.¹¹³
27. It may be suggested that both practical and theological considerations affected Wesleyan practice as the nineteenth century proceeded. Methodism experienced unprecedented numerical growth in the first half of the century, expanding from about 72,000 members and 400 'preaching houses' in 1791 to 6500 (Wesleyan) places of worship and 302,000 members in 1851; the number of circuits increased in the same period by more than 500% (from 79 to 450).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27 (1799). This is the first year in which a list of societies applying for permission is printed in the *Minutes*, but not the first year in which such applications were made.

¹¹⁰ John C. Bowmer, *The Lord's Supper in Methodism 1791-1960* (London, 1961), p. 22. Bowmer's judgment is widely repeated, e.g. in John Munsey Turner, *Wesleyan Methodism* (Peterborough, 2005), p. 9. For examples of protracted morning eucharists in the 1740s, see Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London, 1970 [new edn. Peterborough, 2000]), pp. 85-6, and for well-attended services in the 1780s, Trevor Dearing, *Wesleyan and Tractarian Worship* (London, 1966), p. 12. Given the lack of ordained clergy in early Methodism and the Wesleys' opposition to lay presidency, these services cannot have been frequent, especially as the number of Methodist societies grew.

¹¹¹ Bowmer, *Lord's Supper*, pp. 24-26; N.P. Goldhawk, 'The Methodist People in the Early Victorian Age: Spirituality and Worship', in Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (eds), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ii (London, 1978), pp. 136-37. Richard Watson considers a monthly Communion to 'come up to the spirit of the ancient institution': *Theological Institutes* (London, 1823), quoting seventh edition, iii, p. 547.

¹¹² Bowmer, *Lord's Supper*, pp. 24-26.

¹¹³ For a theology of 'real presence' in fellowship, see *HP 760* (Jesus, we look to thee) (485 in the 1876 Wesleyan hymnal). It is interesting, moreover, that Robert Newton Young's Presidential charge to the ordinands at the Conference of 1887 had much to say about study, holiness, discipline and preaching, but made no reference to administering or receiving the Lord's Supper: 'Ministerial Manliness', in *Sermons and Addresses* (London, 1886), pp. 11-58.

Although the number of ministers also increased substantially, it is likely that the constraints of covering more services and more chapels made it difficult to sustain a pattern of regular eucharistic worship in every place. In the Brackley Circuit, for example, in 1851 two itinerant preachers were responsible for thirty chapels. Eleven of the societies received Communion at least once in the August-October quarter, as many in the morning or afternoon as in the evening, but only three managed two celebrations. In a fifteen week period in the autumn of 1866, the Oxford Wesleyan Circuit, with two ministers and thirteen places of worship, offered the Lord's Supper on only four occasions and in just two chapels: monthly at New Inn Hall Street, in the city centre, and once at Bladon. In the same year, only five of the twenty societies of the Northampton Wesleyan Circuit held a Communion service in the August- October quarter, and none in the morning.¹¹⁴

28. It is also likely that a Wesleyan reaction to the theological emphases of the Oxford Movement and to the development of ritualism in the Church of England after 1840 diminished or qualified Methodism's adherence to its sacramental traditions. The assertion and interpretation of the eucharistic sacrifice and the real presence became matters of controversy between the Tractarians and their opponents, and Methodists were drawn into this debate. Key themes in Wesleyan theology in this period were the eucharist as a memorial of Christ's atoning death and Communion as a sign and seal of the covenant of redemption. A receptionist interpretation of the real presence was advanced as a counter to Roman and Anglo-Catholic teaching. As according significance to the eucharist became a badge of High Churchmanship, so Methodists not only restated their theology, like Evangelicals in the Church of England, but also modified their liturgy. It was certainly the case that the revision of hymnody and liturgy in nineteenth century Wesleyanism sought to guard against anything savouring of sacerdotalism, and this accorded with an influential reading of Wesley which saw his 1738 Aldersgate experience as a conversion from High Churchmanship to Evangelical Christianity. This was partly an indignant rebuttal of High Church polemics which quoted Wesley against contemporary Methodist beliefs and practices.¹¹⁵

29. Many Wesleyans, however, continued to value Holy Communion. This may be seen in the works of theologians from Adam Clarke, Richard Watson and Alfred Barrett to William Burt Pope and Benjamin Gregory and in the writings of influential individuals like Hugh Price Hughes, Henry Lunn and Benjamin Hellier.

¹¹⁴ Circuit plans show that it was common practice for the ministers to lead worship in the town chapels on Sundays and to be appointed to the village societies for weekly mid-week services. On the frequency of celebration, compare John Lenton, 'Methodism and the Eucharist – what some Circuit Plans suggest', *Epworth Review*, 27:4 (October 2000), pp. 57-58, also cited in *His Presence makes the Feast*, section 91. Lenton is cautious about the scope of his 'small study', which looks at just eleven samples, presumably single quarters, from nine different circuits, across 119 years.

¹¹⁵ See Mats Selén, *The Oxford Movement and Wesleyan Methodism in England 1833-1882. A Study in Religious Conflict* (Lund, 1992), pp. 372-93. On the Evangelicals, compare M. Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled* (Carlisle, 2003). For Wesley's 'conversion' from High Churchmanship, see J.H. Rigg, *The Churchmanship of John Wesley* (London, 1878); compare 'An Old Methodist', *John Wesley in company with High Churchmen* (London, 1869).

In 1900 the Conference approved resolutions calling for monthly administration in the principal chapels and a minimum of a quarterly celebration in each society. Morning Communion was also recommended in the larger churches. The Wesleyan Methodist Guild of Divine Service in the early twentieth century advocated 'proper, full and reverent administration of the sacraments' and frequent celebration of Holy Communion, while T H Barratt and J E Rattenbury, writing in the 1920s, reintroduced Methodists to the practice of the Wesleys.¹¹⁶ This helped to set the context for the creation of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship, as well as for the compilation of the Book of Offices, in the years immediately after Methodist Union.¹¹⁷ Inevitably there was diversity of theological expression and sophistication, of emphasis and of practice in these individuals and movements. In their opposition to Tractarianism some Wesleyans veered towards a memorialist understanding of the eucharist, while on the other side the liturgical correctness of the Guild of Divine Service led to accusations of Romanising from the stricter Protestants.¹¹⁸

30. Practice and theology in the other branches of divided Methodism do not seem to have differed greatly from the Wesleyan model. Most advocated a monthly administration of the Lord's Supper in the larger chapels and a quarterly celebration in the smaller ones, but did not always achieve it: in the United Methodist Free Churches' Oxford Circuit, for example, between mid-July and mid-October 1880, three of the eight chapels did not have a single Communion service, four had one, and only the city centre chapel had a monthly celebration. The Primitive Methodists perhaps placed the least emphasis on Communion, prizing the Love Feast as an expression of fellowship, although Hugh Bourne published reflections on the Passover and the Lord's Supper in 1841. There were two principal differences from Wesleyan practice: the use of Local Preachers or other authorised lay people to preside (two in Oxford UMFC chapels in 1880, for instance) and less use of a written liturgy (although most of the denominations had a Book of Services by the end of the nineteenth century).¹¹⁹
31. In the negotiations for Methodist Union, two issues around Communion required solution: lay presidency and the form of liturgy. The former was by far the more difficult and potentially threatening to the union scheme, but it was eventually

¹¹⁶ Some of the theologians are discussed briefly in sections 94-98 of *His Presence makes the Feast*. See also Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 279; Sir Henry Lunn, *Chapters from my Life* (London, 1918), ch. 18; Benjamin Hellier: *His Life and Teaching* (London, 1889), pp. 238-41; James Johnson, *Methodist Worship: A Plea for Toleration* (1906); J.S. Simon, *A Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline* (London, 1924), p. 40; T.H. Barratt, 'The place of the Lord's Supper in early Methodism', *London Quarterly Review*, July 1923, pp. 56-73; J. Ernest Rattenbury, *Wesley's Legacy to the World* (London, 1928), ch. xvi.

¹¹⁷ The MSF was formally constituted in 1935, but it grew from a meeting which coincided with the Uniting Conference of 1932: M. Wellings, 'Discipline in dispute: the origins and early history of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship', *Studies in Church History* (forthcoming).

¹¹⁸ Selén, *Oxford Movement and Wesleyan Methodism*, pp. 374-77; Daniel Hone, *Corrupted Methodist Worship* (London, n.d.).

¹¹⁹ Bowmer, *Lord's Supper*, pp. 34-42.

resolved in a compromise expressed in clause 34 of the Deed of Union.¹²⁰ Liturgy seems not to have been nearly as divisive: after all, the Wesleyans had permitted extempore prayer since 1795, and concern about the neglect of the authorised forms in favour of a free service existed within Wesleyanism, rather than polarising the traditions. By authorising two forms of service the 1936 Book of Offices neatly satisfied all points of view in the newly united church.¹²¹

32. As noted above, *His Presence Makes the Feast* was the first attempt by the Methodist Church in Great Britain to set down in detail what it believes and practises when its people gather to share bread and wine in Holy Communion.¹²² For more than seventy years, the Conference had been asked to deal with a number of other matters relating to Holy Communion (most frequently, the issue of presidency) and had briefly expressed its understanding of Holy Communion in other reports, sometimes in response to other churches and ecumenical bodies and sometimes when focussing on other matters. As to a Methodist theology of the Holy Communion, however, the report acknowledges that in spite of distinguished work by individual scholars, it could be said that Methodist doctrine has received little official formulation and exists more as an undefined (or under-defined) tradition. The theology is implicit in the liturgies, hymns and the practical arrangements for Holy Communion. It should also be noted that there are tensions between what has been said by the various members of the worldwide Methodist family at different times and in different places. For example, there were differences between the responses of the British Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church to the World Council of Churches 'Lima' report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982).¹²³
33. In its review of previous Conference statements and decisions relating to Holy Communion, *His Presence Makes the Feast* refers to a number of documents. Here, we seek to clarify the authority those documents have within the Methodist Church, quote from them, and show the range of Methodist understandings of Holy Communion.
34. The Deed of Union is the Methodist Church's foundation document.¹²⁴ It makes clear that Holy Communion is very important in the life of the Church and of its members. In clause 4, among the doctrinal standards, it is stated that the Methodist Church recognises two sacraments namely Baptism and the Lord's

¹²⁰ See M. Wellings, 'Presidency at the eucharist: a Methodist perspective', *In the Spirit of the Covenant* (Peterborough, 2005).

¹²¹ *Minutes* (1795), p. 323; Norman Wallwork, 'Developments in liturgy and worship in twentieth century Protestant Nonconformity', in Alan P.F. Sell and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle, 2003), pp. 126-28. The first of the two orders was essentially that of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. The second was shorter and attempted to reflect the written forms of the non-Wesleyan traditions, although in practice many of them had been more informal (see *HPMF*, para 63).

¹²² *His Presence Makes the Feast*, para 13.

¹²³ *His Presence Makes the Feast*, para 6.

¹²⁴ The Deed of Union and Standing Orders refer to 'The Lord's Supper', whereas the term used in *The Methodist Worship Book* is 'Holy Communion'.

Supper as of divine appointment and of perpetual obligation of which it is the privilege and duty of members of the Methodist Church to avail themselves. Elsewhere, the Deed makes clear the importance of Holy Communion in two significant ways: people are confirmed and/or received into Methodist membership at a service including the sacrament of the Lord's Supper¹²⁵ and a member who without sufficient reason persistently absents himself or herself from the Lord's Supper and from the meetings for Christian fellowship (thereby severing himself or herself from Christian fellowship), shall cease to be a member of the Methodist Church.¹²⁶

35. In relation to Holy Communion, the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church deal with a number of matters, some of which were discussed in the Commission's interim report.¹²⁷ Standing Orders also make clear the importance of Holy Communion in a number of ways: for example, the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated at the annual Covenant Service¹²⁸ and local churches must maintain a local benevolence fund.¹²⁹
36. In 1986, the Conference established a procedure to make a document a Conference Statement, that is, 'a considered Statement of the judgment of the Conference on some major issue or issues of faith and practice ... framed with a view to standing as such for some years'.¹³⁰ Although the 1937 Conference Report on 'The Nature of the Christian Church' predates this procedure, it was clearly framed with a view to standing as the considered judgment of the Conference on a major issue. It offered a brief exposition of the Methodist Church as a 'sacramental society', claimed that the Methodist Church (following John Wesley) lays great stress on sacramental worship, and in a section on the message of the Church, said: For the writers of the New Testament there is an intimate connection between the Word of the Cross and the way of life which the members of the Church are called upon to tread. ... It is this intimate communion between Christ and His people that gives fullness of meaning to the two sacraments. Baptism is for St Paul a symbol that believers have entered into communion with Christ in His death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is a symbol of the continuance and renewal of this communion, and a proclamation of the Lord's death, 'until he come'. Its purpose is marred when the Body of

¹²⁵ Clause 8(b).

¹²⁶ Clause 10(a). It is interesting to note that *Called to Love and Praise* (para 4.3.5) points out that 'a Wesleyan Conference report of 1889 made a significant admission in declaring that ministers were not to insist that failures to attend one's class meeting warranted loss of membership.'

¹²⁷ These include the requirement to use non-alcoholic wine (see SO 922(2) and *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, particularly section 5.4) and the authorisation of persons other than ministers to preside at Holy Communion (see SO 011, 'Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Ministers to Preside at the Lord's Supper' in *CPD*, Book VI, Part 8 (pp. 797-798), and *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, particularly section 6.5).

¹²⁸ SO 608; see *In the Spirit of the Covenant*, chapter 2, particularly sections 2.7.7 and 2.7.8.

¹²⁹ SO 651; the Benevolence Fund is for the relief of poverty and distress in the local congregation and neighbourhood, and more widely. The association of Holy Communion with those in need can be traced back through *The Book of Common Prayer* (in which the Intercession refers to 'our alms and oblations') to the New Testament, including 1 Corinthians 11:17-22. Communion Stewards were formally known as 'Poor Stewards'.

¹³⁰ SO 129.

Christ is riven by factions or desecrated by selfishness.¹³¹ It points forward to the richer life in the future, when Christ shall be manifested in the full glory of the Kingdom of God. Both Sacraments are therefore modes of proclaiming the Word which is Christ Himself, active in the life of the Church.¹³²

37. Part of the report's summary of New Testament teaching is that the Church's unity is expressed 'in life and in common worship, particularly in the ordinances of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.'¹³³

38. In 1999, *Called to Love and Praise* was adopted as a Conference Statement. It is a Statement of Methodism's understanding of the Nature of the Church and supersedes the 1937 report. In its discussion of the Church as 'One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic' it says: Methodists 'recognize the centrality of the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. They proclaim in word and sign the whole Gospel of creation and redemption'. Both are powerful expressions of the Gospel of Christ. Both anticipate and celebrate in the life of an individual and of the Church God's purpose of salvation for all people. As such, they are neither private rites, nor social customs, but acts of worship and thanksgiving on behalf of and in solidarity with the whole world. The Eucharist, in particular, focusses and expresses both the ongoing and the future life of the Church. As many liturgies, both ancient and modern, imply, it prefigures and images the life of the kingdom of God. Christian people, in all their diversity, come together regularly to meet around the Lord's table, celebrating in word and deed the risen presence of the Christ who gave his life, and sharing in a joint commitment to him in the world. In this typical act of Christian worship the Eucharist strengthens, and, in a sense, makes the Church. Tragically, there is division, notably between Catholics and Protestants, about the nature and extent of the community which can properly meet around the Lord's table. Thus a rite which powerfully expresses unity has become a source of disagreement. But ideally the Eucharist represents a high point in a dynamic life in Christ which itself is 'eucharistic' – that is, permeated throughout by thankfulness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹³⁴

39. In a later section on 'Worship and the Spiritual Life of Methodism' in which worship is said to have a twofold intention (first, adoration and praise, and, second, our transformation by the grace and power of God), the 1999 Statement says:

¹³¹ A footnote in the report refers to Romans 6:3-11 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

¹³² 'The Nature of the Christian Church (1937)', I.3(iv) in *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order Volume 1: 1933-1983* (second edition), pp. 15f. Later, in a section on the Principles of the Protestant Reformation, the report says, 'The Word of God is primarily Jesus Himself, the Incarnate Lord. This evangel is proclaimed and heard in the congregation. It is also set forth in the Sacraments, where it is the visible word (*verbum visibile*)' (ibid, II.3 (p. 24)). On Holy Communion forming a sacramental society, see further below.

¹³³ Ibid, I.5 (p. 20).

¹³⁴ *Called to Love and Praise*, para 2.4.8; the quotation in the opening lines is taken from the response of the Methodist Church of Great Britain and Ireland (sic) to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, (*Churches Respond to BEM*, WCC 1986, Vol II, p. 215).

40. Methodists value the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (as it has traditionally been called in Methodism). Through this Sacrament Methodists experience the real presence of Christ. John Wesley declared it to be not only a confirming but a converting ordinance.¹³⁵ Later still, *Called to Love and Praise* lists three groups of people, other than members, who are especially welcome at the Lord's Table: first, children;¹³⁶ secondly, 'communicant members of other Churches whose discipline so permits';¹³⁷ and thirdly, 'because the Lord's Supper is regarded both as a confirming and converting ordinance, the Methodist Church welcomes others to communion who wish thus to express their real or dawning faith in Christ.'¹³⁸ In its conclusion, the Statement asks what kind of community a church might be. Among its answers is, 'A community of all ages, different races, varying backgrounds and occupations – richly diverse, but united around the Lord's Table'.¹³⁹ In normal usage, the term Conference Reports refers to those reports presented to the Conference which have been received or adopted by the Conference. The most recent Methodist catechism was adopted by the Conference in 1986 and revised in 2000 to recognise the development of the Diaconate and the publication of *The Methodist Worship Book*. It is fair to say that the Conference gave this document greater attention than many others. It includes the following question and answer:

What is the Lord's Supper?

41. In the Lord's Supper Jesus Christ is present with his worshipping people and gives himself to them as their Lord and Saviour. As they eat the bread and drink the wine, through the power of the Holy Spirit they receive him by faith and with thanksgiving. They give thanks with the whole Church for Christ's sacrifice of himself once and for all on the cross. The Lord's Supper recalls Christ's Last Supper with the disciples. It proclaims Christ's passion, death and resurrection, unites the participants with him so that they are a living sacrifice in him, and gives them a foretaste of his heavenly banquet.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ *Called to Love and Praise*, para 4.3.3; see *HPMF*, para 76-82 and 194, and 'Children and Holy Communion (1987)' para 17 in *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order, Volume 2: 1984-2000*, pp. 163-175 for discussions of Communion and conversion.

¹³⁶ For the most recent detailed discussion of this topic in a Conference report and the current Connexional Guidelines, see 'Children and Holy Communion (2000)', in *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order Volume 2: 1984-2000*, pp. 176-188.

¹³⁷ The quotation is from *The Methodist Service Book* (1975), p. B1, General Direction 2.

¹³⁸ *Called to Love and Praise*, para 4.4.7.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, para 5.5.

¹⁴⁰ *A Catechism for the use of the people called Methodists*, para 49. The commentary material alongside the above question and answer, three biblical references are given (Mark 14:22-26 and 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-29). The following note is also provided: 'Some Christians call the Lord's Supper 'The Eucharist', from the Greek verb, *eucharisto*, 'I give thanks.' It is also called Holy Communion, because we all share together in Christ; and, by some, The Mass (from the Latin, 'I send'), because at the end we are sent out to serve Christ in the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.'

42. It is interesting to compare this with the answer given in the Catechism approved by the Conference of 1952: In the Lord's Supper, which is the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Jesus Christ gives Himself to us as our Lord and Saviour, and we give thanks with the whole Church for His sacrifice of Himself once offered, proclaim His passion and death, offer ourselves anew to Him, and anticipate by faith the perfect fellowship of the Heavenly Feast.¹⁴¹
43. In 1987, the Conference adopted a report on Children and Holy Communion. As it made the case for churches actively to encourage the fuller participation of children in the Lord's Supper, it briefly explored 'Some Understandings of the Lord's Supper' and 'Our Traditions'.¹⁴² A further report on Children and Holy Communion was adopted by the Conference in 2000 and this established that it be considered normal practice for baptized children to participate in Holy Communion by receiving bread and wine.¹⁴³
44. His Presence Makes the Feast also draws attention to a number of 'considered Conference responses to various major ecumenical statements namely, Edinburgh (1937), Lund (1952), Lima (1982) and the Roman Catholic encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995).' This description is not to suggest that other Conference reports are 'unconsidered' or 'ill considered' but recognises that in addressing ecumenical partners the Methodist Church seeks to be even more careful in what it says, whether to recognise diversity, give greater clarity, or acknowledge its 'undefined (or under-defined) tradition'.¹⁴⁴ These responses suggest that there are four key theological understandings that are shared by the Methodist Church with other Churches: (a) that Holy Communion is 'of divine appointment and of perpetual obligation', (b) that it stands as a memorial of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, (c) that it is a sacrament of Christ's 'real presence' and sacrificial self-giving, and (d) that it is an eschatological anticipation of fellowship with Christ in his eternal kingdom.¹⁴⁵
45. Before looking at the theology of Holy Communion that is implicit in Methodist liturgy and hymnody, it is worth quoting the Introduction to the 'Orders of Service for Holy Communion' in *The Methodist Worship Book: Holy Communion*, or the Lord's Supper, is the central act of Christian worship, in which the Church responds to our Lord's command, 'Do this in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

¹⁴¹ *The Senior Catechism of the Methodist Church* (1952), para 51.

¹⁴² References to these sections of this report are made below.

¹⁴³ 'Children and Holy Communion (2000)', in *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order, Volume 2: 1984-2000*, pp. 176-188.

¹⁴⁴ This last phrase is from *His Presence Makes the Feast*, para 6, which was received by the 2003 Conference.

¹⁴⁵ *HPMF*, para 122; the phrase 'of divine appointment and of perpetual obligation' comes from the Methodist Church's doctrinal standards and is also said of Baptism.

46. Many of the themes of John and Charles Wesley's Hymns on the Lord's Supper (1745) are reflected in present-day ecumenical understanding of this sacrament. In communion with the people of God in heaven and on earth, we give thanks for God's mighty acts in creation and redemption, represented supremely in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this means of grace, the Church joyfully celebrates the presence of Christ in its midst, calls to mind his sacrifice and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is united with him as the Body of Christ. At the Lord's table, Christ's disciples share bread and wine, the tokens of his dying love and the food for their earthly pilgrimage, which are also a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, prepared for all people. Those who gather around the table of the Lord are empowered for mission: apostles, sent out in the power of the Spirit, to live and work to God's praise and glory. One of the keynotes of the Methodist revival was John Wesley's emphasis on 'The Duty of Constant Communion' and it is still the duty and privilege of members of the Methodist Church to share in this sacrament. The Methodist Conference has encouraged local churches to admit baptized children to communion. Those who are communicants and belong to other Churches whose discipline so permits are also welcome as communicants in the Methodist Church.¹⁴⁶
47. The Methodist liturgical tradition is very diverse. Since Methodist Union in 1932, three service books and a number of other orders of service have been authorised by the Conference for use in the Methodist Church. The Book of Offices was authorised and published in 1936. The component parts of The Methodist Service Book (1975) were authorised in 1974 or 1975, and in 1998 the Conference authorised The Methodist Worship Book which was published the following year. The Methodist Service Book had a single order of service for Holy Communion with only one great prayer of thanksgiving. As the frequency of Communion Services increased this, along with other factors, led to increased liturgical provision. The Methodist Worship Book provides eight full orders of service for the seasons of the Christian Year (including three for 'Ordinary Seasons') as well as seven for particular occasions, including Maundy Thursday and Covenant, Marriage, Healing and Ordination services.
48. Authorised service books, however, are but one strand in the Methodist liturgical tradition. Both fixed forms and freer expressions of worship have been and are valued in Methodism and authorised texts provide a standard for worship; they are not intended to curb creative freedom but to provide norms for its guidance.¹⁴⁷ The use of 'freer expressions of worship', as well as liturgical texts from other sources (including individuals, communities, and other churches), extends to services of Holy Communion. This and the wisdom of the ancient saying, *Lex orandi, lex credendi* are two of the reasons why The Methodist Worship Book includes 'Guidance for Ordering a Service of Holy Communion'.¹⁴⁸ The four parts of the service (Gathering, Ministry of the Word, Lord's Supper,

¹⁴⁶ *MWB*, pp. 114f

¹⁴⁷ *The Methodist Worship Book*, pp. vii f.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p 221-222.

and Dismissal) are emphasised and, within the section headed 'The Lord's Supper', the four-fold shape of Taking, Giving Thanks, Breaking, and Sharing clearly reflects the convergence that has emerged from the Liturgical Movement, including the work of the Joint Liturgical Group. The most detailed part of the Guidance is in the contents of the great prayer of thanksgiving. The presiding minister leads the prayer in which the people are invited to offer praise to God. It includes thanksgiving for creation, for God's self-revelation, for the salvation of the world through Christ, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit, with special reference to the season or festival. This may be followed by a version of 'Holy, holy, holy'. The story of the institution of the Lord's Supper is then told, Christ's death and resurrection are recalled, and God is asked to receive the worshippers' sacrifice of praise. There is prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit that the gifts of bread and wine may be, for those who are participating, the body and blood of Christ. The worshippers, offering themselves in service to God, ask to be united in communion with all God's people on earth and in heaven. The prayer concludes with all honour and glory being given to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, with the people responding with a loud 'Amen'. It was this guidance that formed the basis of the Conference's guidelines to Local Ecumenical Partnerships on 'local liturgies' in respect of Holy Communion.¹⁴⁹ Those guidelines begin by making clear the role of the presiding minister,¹⁵⁰ continue with the Guidance from The Methodist Worship Book outlined above, and conclude by drawing particular attention to three points: first, the Ministry of the Word should provide for the reading and proclamation of Scripture, and a reading from the Gospels should invariably be included; secondly, the Lord's Supper should invariably include the four actions of 'taking, giving thanks, break and sharing'; and thirdly, the 'great prayer of thanksgiving', sometimes called the 'eucharistic prayer', should invariably include all the elements shown above, though not necessarily in the order indicated. The various authorised orders of service for Holy Communion in The Methodist Worship Book and the one published in 2000 'for use at the Ministerial Session of a Synod' comply with the guidance and the guidelines.

49. Historically, hymnody has been more significant for the Methodist people than liturgy. Methodism was born in song and sings its faith. Traditionally, Methodists sing what they believe and believe what they sing: *lex cantandi, lex credendi*. In Methodism, the hymn book is 'authorised' by the Conference 'for use in all Methodist churches in the Connexion' and is used for private devotion as well as for congregational singing.¹⁵¹ As part of the Not Strangers But Pilgrims process

¹⁴⁹ *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order, Volume 2: 1984-2000*, pp. 365-367 (also in *Agenda* (1999), pp. 217-219).

¹⁵⁰ To do so, they quoted from *MWB*, p. 115, note 2.

¹⁵¹ The terms of the authorisation are as given in *Hymns and Psalms*. It is important to recognise that when authorising liturgical texts, the Conference has, for the most part, had control over every word. The exceptions would be those texts in copyright which their authors have declined to see amended and those from sources like the English Language Liturgical Consultation. Although a study of most hymn books will reveal the omission and/or addition of verses from and to an author's original (along with occasional minor textual alterations), hymn and song texts are probably more 'controlled' than liturgical ones.

in the 1980s, the Methodist Church's 'informal statement' of its self-understanding included the following:

50. Holy Communion is celebrated in most Methodist churches at least once a month, and there has been a growing emphasis upon its importance as we have progressively recovered a sense of the place it occupied in early Methodism and of the contribution Charles Wesley made to eucharistic devotion through his hymns. Hymnody is in fact the key to our tradition of worship. The Methodist Hymn Book and its successor Hymns and Psalms, authorised for use by the Methodist Conference, are akin in their importance to the Prayer Book for Anglicans. They enshrine and communicate our theology and spirituality and are perhaps the strongest element in our common identity, for their use is virtually universal.¹⁵² More than 20 years on, however, many Methodist churches use other collections of hymns in addition to the authorised collections and individual leaders of worship use material from other sources. This means that some would question the conclusion that the authorised hymn books are the strongest element in Methodism's common identity.¹⁵³

51. One of the first acts of the newly united Methodist Church in Great Britain was to authorise The Methodist Hymn Book. Work had begun on it in 1929 before the union so that it could be published in 1933. In a section headed 'The Sacraments: The Lord's Supper', there were 18 hymns with a further seven from elsewhere in the book listed at the end of the section.¹⁵⁴ In 1969, an authorised supplement to The Methodist Hymn Book was published called Hymns and Songs. A further 17 hymns or songs, under the heading 'Holy Communion', were thereby added, including some by Charles Wesley and others which are catholic in style and origin.¹⁵⁵ In 1983, Hymns and Psalms was published. The Lord's Supper section contains 39 hymns but, once again, hymns in other sections of the book are clearly eucharistic.¹⁵⁶ Within it's most recently authorised hymn

¹⁵² *Not Strangers But Pilgrims: A Methodist Response*, p. 3 (The President's Council authorised the then Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Brian Beck, to gather a group to prepare the response on behalf of the Methodist Church; see also *Agenda* (1986), pp. 529f.)

¹⁵³ The Conference report on a 'Proposed Hymn Book Supplement' claimed that most congregations use authorised hymn books as their normal book (*Agenda* (2004), p. 441, para 4.)

¹⁵⁴ In addition to the hymns by Charles Wesley, the 18 included William Bright's 'And now, O Father, mindful of the love', 'O Bread to pilgrims given' (probably wrongly ascribed to Thomas Aquinas), and James Montgomery's 'Be known to us in breaking bread'. Those listed at the end of the section included Horatius Bonar's 'Jesus, sun and shield are thou', Bernard of Clairvaux's 'Jesu, thou joy of loving hearts', Isaac Watts' 'When I survey the wondrous cross', and Charles Wesley's 'Let him to whom we now belong'.

¹⁵⁵ These included 'Father, we thank thee' from prayers in the *Didache*, Charles Wesley's 'Glory, love, and praise, and honour', 'Let all mortal flesh keep silence' from the Liturgy of St James, Thomas Aquinas' 'Sing, my tongue, the Saviour's glory', 'Let us break bread together', and Patrick Appleford's 'Lord Jesus Christ'. All these examples were included in *Hymns and Psalms*.

¹⁵⁶ In addition to the hymns by Charles Wesley (including *HP*, 598 'Because thou hast said' which concludes *HPMF*), the 39 include William Chatterton Dix's 'Alleluia! Sing to Jesus', 'As your family Lord, see us here', Fred Pratt Green's 'An Upper Room did our Lord prepare', Fred Kaan's 'Father, who in Jesus found us' and 'Now let us from this table rise', S. Suzanne Toolan's 'I am the Bread of Life', and 'Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands' based on the Liturgy of Malabar. Those Communion hymns found elsewhere in the book include Fred Pratt Green's 'Lord, we have come at your own invitation' as well as the examples listed above from the list at the end of the equivalent section in *MHB*.

book, then, Methodism has a very diverse collection of hymns expressing a variety of theological emphases and interpretations.¹⁵⁷

52. Having looked at Methodist liturgy and hymnody, we turn now to the Theological Resources section of *His Presence Makes the Feast*. This offers some more general resource material that informs and is informed by Methodist belief and practice. It begins with some reflections on 'Language and Sacraments' and ends with summaries of the origins of Holy Communion and eucharistic theology in recent years. The second part of the section is the most substantial. It presents the biblical background which informs Methodist understandings of nine key themes in the theology of Holy Communion, indicates the degree or absence of emphasis placed on each, and how these interpretations feature in conversations with Methodism's ecumenical partners.¹⁵⁸
53. Noting that religious language uses words in different ways from everyday conversation, the report says that present-day understandings of language and its relationship to reality have positive implications for talking about sacraments. Attention is then drawn to three things about the language used by the Church of the Lord's Supper. First, it is far from arbitrary since it 'reflects or is derived from not only biblical origins but also the accumulated liturgical resources of the worshipping Church over its 2000 years of history.'¹⁵⁹ Secondly, it draws on pictorial, figurative, metaphorical, and analogical forms to express the inexpressible, the mystery of God, and to draw listener and speaker alike into an experience of the divine. The Lord's Supper is more than a sign, an indicator or pointer; it is a symbol which establishes a connection or bridge between 'the world of everyday sense experience and relationships and the world of meaning, significance and value, a world of the spirit.' Symbols can also be thought of as illumination. One of the difficulties noted about this way of using language is that, through repetition, figures of speech die as images and are taken merely as literal descriptions to be accepted or rejected as such. There is also the danger that people invest too heavily in particular forms of words.¹⁶⁰ The third feature of language relevant to an understanding of Holy Communion is that it can be used to act upon the world, to change or enact things, to bring things about. Some of the things we say are 'speech acts' or 'performative utterances' and the report suggests that this insight into language is very helpful to our understanding of Holy Communion for in the service 'we are doing things with words and actions – acknowledging, praising, confessing, committing, promising, identifying, binding.'¹⁶¹ Likening a Communion Service to the performance of a great musical work also suggests that 'in the Lord's Supper, the original act of saving grace remains unique and unrepeatable [cf, the original creative act by which the work was conceived by the composer] but the language of the service recreates

¹⁵⁷ Cf *HPMF*, para 7.

¹⁵⁸ *HPMF*, para 147.

¹⁵⁹ *HPMF*, paras 139f.

¹⁶⁰ *HPMF*, para 138.

¹⁶¹ *HPMF*, para 144.

in words the original drama and allows the worshipper to become both participant and beneficiary of the saving act.¹⁶²

54. The third part of the theological resources section explores the origins of Holy Communion, including the influence of the eucharistic prayer of Hippolytus (circa 215) on liturgical revision in recent years. The last part refers to two contemporary ecumenical themes. The first is the notion of Holy Communion forming a sacramental community: 'the Church as the Body of Christ is brought into being and formed by both word and sacrament'. Historically, some Churches have placed more emphasis on one rather than the other, but the report claims that Methodists would want to align themselves with the current ecumenical insistence that the Body of Christ is formed, perhaps equally, by the nourishment it receives from both Word and Table.¹⁶³ The second 'ecumenical theme' is that of 'embodied' worship and emphasises the significance of the layout of the worship space and the cycle of the Christian year, as well as the use of story, music, colour, movement, light, and symbol in the proclamation of the saving acts of God in Christ.¹⁶⁴

55. The nine themes in the second part of the theological resources section are:

- Thanksgiving (Eucharist) [He gave thanks]
- Life in Unity (Koinonia) [We are one body]
- Remembering (Anamnesis) [Do this in remembrance of me]
- Sacrifice [... For you]
- Presence [His presence makes the feast]
- The work of the spirit (Epiclesis) [Pour out your Spirit]
- Anticipation (Eschatology) [A foretaste of the heavenly banquet]
- Mission and justice [To live and work to God's praise and glory]
- Personal devotion [Bread to pilgrims given].

56. All that can be done here is to summarise some of the key points made in the report, which itself acknowledges that space did not permit justice to be done to all the issues involved.¹⁶⁵ In particular, we focus on the current range of Methodist theological understandings.

57. 'The emphasis on Holy Communion as the Church's great act of thanksgiving, inseparably linked to Christ's offering of thanks to the Father, is both ancient and contemporary.'¹⁶⁶ Various influences have led to the focus of thanksgiving being

¹⁶² *HPMF*, para 145.

¹⁶³ *HPMF*, para 203; cf. the 'The Nature of the Christian Church' (1937, referred to above).

¹⁶⁴ *HPMF*, para 204.

¹⁶⁵ *HPMF*, para 147. These nine themes have been explored further, though in a different order, in *Share this Feast: Reflecting on Holy Communion* (2006). It is a book designed to aid 'personal devotion' by helping people reflect and pray about Holy Communion. It was produced by the Expressions of Faith group in the Methodist Church Connexional Team in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee and was commended by Archbishop Rowan Williams as 'a superb, clear and imaginative guide to the heart of the sacramental life in the Church' which 'will be welcomed by all Christians who are trying to understand more fully how their sharing in Holy Communion equips them for a transformed human life.'

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, para 148.

broadened from the sacrificial death of Christ to the whole Christ event.¹⁶⁷ In its more recent service books, Methodism has responded very positively to the Liturgical Movement's emphasis on the eucharist as an act of thanksgiving for the total scope of creation and redemption.¹⁶⁸ The celebratory character of Holy Communion was emphasised by the Wesleys but, as noted above, the focus moved back to a solemn memorial of Christ's death in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Indeed, some Methodists, along with some in other 'Free Churches' and Churches in the Reformed tradition, would still see that as the primary emphasis alongside solemn personal communion with Christ.¹⁶⁹

58. In the gospels and in the letters of Paul, shared meals are seen as a way of both breaking down barriers and building up relationships.¹⁷⁰ 'This understanding of Holy Communion as creating, sustaining and expressing intimate community in the Body of Christ continued to be strong in the early Church up to the time of Augustine.'¹⁷¹ This emphasis was then largely lost and the sense of corporate celebration was replaced with the view that Holy Communion was 'an awesome rite' carried out by the clergy. This, in turn, led to less frequent communion because people felt 'unworthy'.¹⁷² It is only 30-40 years ago that, despite repeated encouragement by the Conference, many in a Methodist congregation would leave at the end of an 'ordinary' service before the 'tacked on' Lord's Supper. More recently, there has been a much greater sense that Holy Communion both creates and expresses the believers' life in unity with each other and with Christ.¹⁷³ Whether that includes eucharistic sharing as a means towards greater church unity is a matter on which Methodism has changed. 'Until the early 20th century the class ticket or some other device was a ticket of admission to Communion. ... In recent years, Methodism has practised generous eucharistic hospitality for believers of all Christian traditions.'¹⁷⁴

59. The theme of remembering begins with an exploration of the biblical understanding of anamnesis as 'calling into present reality a fresh outpouring of the saving power of the event remembered.'¹⁷⁵ This dynamic concept of memorial, however, has not been accepted by all Christians, including Methodists. Understandings have varied from a 'bare memorial' to a 'very vivid

¹⁶⁷ See the second collect for Maundy Thursday in *MWB* which gives thanks 'for the gift of this sacrament in which we remember Jesus Christ your Son' (p. 538). Some earlier versions of this collect give thanks for the sacrament in which God has given 'the memorial of the passion' of Jesus Christ, but see the first collect for Maundy Thursday in *MSB*.

¹⁶⁸ See the great prayer of thanksgiving in *MSB* and the many more in *MWB*. This theme was also referred to in 'Children and Holy Communion (1987)' para 14: 'The Lord's Supper is not only a declaration of God's redeeming love, it is also an affirmation that God's self-giving love is at the heart of creation.'

¹⁶⁹ *HPMF*, para 150-151.

¹⁷⁰ *HPMF*, para 152.

¹⁷¹ *HPMF*, para 153

¹⁷² *HPMF*, para 153.

¹⁷³ See also 'Children and Holy Communion (1987)' para 13.

¹⁷⁴ *HPMF*, para 156.

¹⁷⁵ *HPMF*, para 157; cf 'Children and Holy Communion (1987)' para 12: 'To remember is so to relive the past that the power and meaning of the event become part of the experience and conviction of the one remembering.'

“calling to mind” and “making present” sacramentally of Christ’s sacrifice.¹⁷⁶ The Wesleys had a dynamic sense of ‘memorial’¹⁷⁷ but later Methodism largely lost it.¹⁷⁸ Once again, through Methodism’s involvement in the Ecumenical and Liturgical Movements, there has been an increased, though not universal, appropriation of the dynamic sense of remembrance which is seen in both the Methodist Service and Worship Books.¹⁷⁹ The discussion of sacrifice is the longest in this section of His Presence Makes the Feast. Whilst recognising that the New Testament Eucharist celebrates the inseparability of Christ’s sacrifice and ours, it outlines three understandings of sacrifice in connection with the sacrament: Holy Communion as a sacrifice of praise,¹⁸⁰ Holy Communion as an occasion for the believers to offer themselves to God as ‘a living sacrifice’,¹⁸¹ and ‘Holy Communion as a sacrifice offered by the Church in union with the ascended and interceding Christ.’¹⁸² The report claims that almost all Christians would be happy with the first, most would probably accept the second, but the third is more controversial. As we have seen, the Wesleys inherited notions of the eucharist as implying a sacrifice from Dean Brevint and other seventeenth-century Anglican divines and expressed it in hymns like ‘O God of our forefathers, hear’.¹⁸³ 19th century Methodism, however, was normally dismissive of this understanding and in recent years it has been hesitant. The report says that it can be argued that, in Methodism, the emphasis is primarily on the ‘sacrifice of praise’, but the section concludes with this interpretation:

60. In Holy Communion Methodists plead the completed and eternal sacrifice of Christ, and we offer ourselves anew in and through the eternal sacrifice, but we do not in any way offer the sacrifice again. At Holy Communion what Methodists do is to make a memorial of and participate in the offering of Christ.¹⁸⁴

61. The subtitle of the section on presence, a quotation from one of Charles Wesley’s hymns,¹⁸⁵ gave the report its title. The concept can be understood in one or more of a number of ways: the general presence of the risen and ascended Christ who is with us always, the presence of Christ as ‘invisible host’, welcoming us to His table, the presence of Christ in the action of ‘breaking bread’, the presence of Christ in the act of sharing in the consecrated bread and wine and the fellowship expressed and created by it, and the presence of Christ in the consecrated elements.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁶ *HPMF*, para 158.

¹⁷⁷ See *Hymns and Psalms*, 629 particularly v 3.

¹⁷⁸ See ‘Children and Holy Communion (1987)’ para 18.

¹⁷⁹ *HPMF*, para 161.

¹⁸⁰ See Hebrews 13:15.

¹⁸¹ See Romans 12:1; this idea finds a particular focus in Methodism at the Covenant Service.

¹⁸² *HPMF*, para 167.

¹⁸³ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, 125 (HP 554), in particular verse 2.

¹⁸⁴ *HPMF*, para 171.

¹⁸⁵ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, 81 (HP 614).

¹⁸⁶ *HPMF*, para 172.

62. The report claims that almost all Christians would agree that the risen Christ is present in Holy Communion as ‘invisible host’ and would recognise him in the ‘breaking of the bread’. It also claims that most would also recognise him in the eucharistic community, as they also recognise him ‘where two or three are gathered together’. The disagreements arise – and continue – about ‘whether [Christ] can also be said to be present in the consecrated elements of bread and wine’.¹⁸⁷ According to the report, ‘to most Methodists this is not an issue with which they are greatly concerned and they do not emphasise any particular moment or words in the liturgy as effecting an act of consecration.’¹⁸⁸ A brief historical survey recognises that, although from very early on, it was generally thought that Christ was present in the consecrated elements (a view which is still strongly maintained in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran Churches and also by many Anglicans), at the Reformation, most Protestants, other than Lutherans, denied any essential change in the bread and wine, though there were other differences between them. The Wesleys’ views seem to be ambiguous: the hymns talk of both ‘tokens’¹⁸⁹ and of ‘everlasting bread’ and ‘mystic wine’.¹⁹⁰ That ambiguity has continued to be a feature of Methodist understanding. In the World Methodist Council’s dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, for example, the Denver Report of 1971 asserted a joint conviction that ‘bread and wine do not mean the same outside of the context of eucharistic celebration as they do in that sacrament’ but it also recorded a difference over ‘the transformation of bread and wine’ and that ‘Methodists do not consider the transformation to be such that bread and wine cease to be bread and wine.’¹⁹¹ In various international dialogues, Methodists have suggested that it is mistaken to ‘over-define’ theological understandings of Holy Communion and British Methodism’s response to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry expressed concern about any belief that the presence of Christ in Holy Communion was somehow ‘superior’ to his presence in other means of grace.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ *HPMF*, para 174

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, 72 (HP 602); this hymn is worth quoting in full:

Come, Holy Ghost, thine influence shed,
 And realize the sign;
 Thy life infuse into the bread,
 Thy power into the wine.
 Effectual let the tokens prove
 And made, by heavenly art,
 Fit channels to convey thy love
 To every faithful heart.

¹⁹⁰ *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, 40 (HP 596).

¹⁹¹ *HPMF*, para 176; see *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, 57, v 1:

O the depth of love Divine,
 Th’ unfathomable grace!
 Who shall say how bread and wine
 God into man conveys!
How the bread his flesh imparts,
How the wine transmits his blood
 Fills his faithful people’s hearts
 With all the life of God!

¹⁹² *HPMF*, para 177-8.

This section of the report concludes by observing that it is clear that individual Methodists will have widely varying views on the concept of the 'real presence'.

63. The work of the Spirit is one of the emphases in Methodism's theological understanding of Holy Communion. The invocation of the Holy Spirit in Holy Communion is not mentioned in the New Testament but there is evidence of the practice in some very early rites. It continued to be very important in the Eastern tradition but in medieval Western theology it was downplayed and not restored by the Reformers. The Wesleys were aware of the role of the Holy Spirit in Holy Communion from their knowledge of the Eastern Church and of the 1549 Prayer Book.¹⁹³ The hymns 'Come Holy Ghost, thine influence shed' and 'Come thou everlasting Spirit' demonstrate their understanding that the Spirit was to be invoked to make real and true all that God had promised to bestow on the faithful through Holy Communion.¹⁹⁴ This theme has received renewed emphasis through the Liturgical Movement and, in British Methodism, following the reintroduction of an epiclesis in the 1975 Methodist Service Book, an even stronger one is used in all but one of the great prayers of thanksgiving in The Methodist Worship Book.¹⁹⁵
64. In British Methodism, one of the best remembered liturgical prayers is the postcommunion prayer in the 1975 Communion Service. It speaks of Holy Communion as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. This is a strong theme in the New Testament accounts of the Last and Lord's Supper as well as the parables about feasting in the kingdom.¹⁹⁶ The Wesleys considered this theme important and the third section of their Hymns on the Lord's Supper contains 23 hymns.¹⁹⁷ Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry included the eucharist as 'meal of the kingdom' as one of its five themes and responses to it were positive. As His Presence Makes the Feast says: This central eucharistic theme, often dormant in the history of the Church, has been revived in recent years, not least by the Lima statement and those who have written on Holy Communion and human liberation.¹⁹⁸
65. This leads well into the eighth of the nine themes: mission and justice. 'From the earliest times, Holy Communion has been seen as implying a personal and corporate commitment to mission and justice.'¹⁹⁹ This theme in Holy Communion

¹⁹³ The prayer of consecration in the first English Prayer Book contains this invocation of the Holy Spirit: 'Hear us, O merciful Father, we beseech thee; and with thy Holy Spirit and word, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these thy gifts, and creatures of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the body and blood of thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ.'

¹⁹⁴ HPMF, para 180-182; the two hymns are *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 72 (HP 602 full text above) and *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 16 (HP 298); see also 'Children and Holy Communion (1987)' para

¹⁹⁵ The standard, 'deliberately ambiguous' form is 'Send [or 'Pour out'] your Holy Spirit that these gifts of bread and wine may be for us the body and blood of Christ.' The one, non-deliberate, exception is on p. 226 where an adapted version of the form in the MSB appears: 'grant that by the power of your life-giving Spirit, we who eat and drink these holy gifts may share in the body and blood of Christ'.

¹⁹⁶ HPMF, para 185; see also 'Children and Holy Communion (1987)' para 14.

¹⁹⁷ HPMF, para 187. See above on John and Charles Wesley.

¹⁹⁸ HPMF, para 188.

¹⁹⁹ HPMF, para 190.

relates well to Methodism's long-standing concern for mission and justice. Its own liturgical revisions have emphasised the commitment to go in peace in the power of the Spirit to live and work to God's praise and glory; indeed, in *The Methodist Worship Book* (as in *The Methodist Service Book*), it is the dismissal rather than the blessing that is marked as one of the basic elements of the service. The final theme is personal devotion. In Methodism, as in almost all Christian traditions, receiving Holy Communion is seen as a very significant element in Christian devotion. The particular emphasis of this section is the question of who should share in this important act. Once again, John Wesley's understanding of Holy Communion as a 'converting ordinance' is referred to and the point is made that he assumed that the 'unconverted' who came to Holy Communion would be members of the Methodist societies, 'desiring to flee from the wrath to come', and would have assumed a very serious search for God. Most Methodists, it is claimed, would still feel that Wesley's approach was valid and that whatever the Church's discipline over eucharistic communion, it should never exclude those who come with the serious intention that Wesley assumed. Many might feel that, to the extent that Holy Communion commemorates Christ's openness to sinners, such an approach is eminently defensible.²⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

66. In this chapter we have set out the resources – official and unofficial – in our two churches for the understanding of the Eucharist, Holy Communion or Lord's Supper. We have noted our common heritage in the writings of the English Reformers and the Book of Common Prayer, the work of Anglican divines up to the mid-eighteenth century, and the eucharistic hymnody of Charles Wesley. We have brought the story up to date (though at the cost of leaving out considerable tracts of history) and summarised recent reflection on the Eucharist within our churches. Differences of practice with regard to the eucharistic elements, presidency, and the scope for non-liturgical worship have been considered in the Common Statement An Anglican-Methodist Covenant and in our first Interim Report In the Spirit of the Covenant.
67. The Common Statement concluded that the inexhaustible richness of the Eucharist had given rise to different theological emphases, but noted that these were held as differences within, rather than between our churches. It is a basic rule of ecumenical engagement that we should not require more from our ecumenical partner than we require from the members of our own community. We therefore concur with the judgement of the Common Statement that there are no 'fundamental differences of understanding between us' (para. 138). But we believe that we can go further on the basis of the material that we have looked at in this chapter and say that there is no discernible difference in the

²⁰⁰ *HPMF*, para 194; see also *HPMF*, para 76-82, 'Children and Holy Communion (1987)' para 17, and 'Children and Holy Communion (2000)' para 3.4.1.

teaching of our churches on the Eucharist. With regard to this central sacrament of the Christian Church we share a common faith.

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Theologies of Holy Communion 8th draft 1**