42. Revision of authorised liturgy: order of work, level of authorisation, format of publication

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1 Introduction

1.1 The 2025 Methodist Conference agreed to a major project to revise our authorised liturgy. This will result in a new collection of authorised resources, made available in a variety of formats, print and digital. However, it will not be published as a single book containing everything. Some resources will only be available in digital format. This will be a rolling programme of revision. As the first stage of the process, there are two pieces of work to be considered by the Conference of 2026. These were specified by resolution 2025/32/3:

> 32/3. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to report to the Conference of 2026 on:
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> a. liturgical style and language, including the theology relating to them, and offering principles to guide liturgical revision;
> b. proposals regarding areas for which authorised liturgical resources should be provided; and
> c. a proposed order of work for the revision and publication of authorised liturgies, including the level of revision proposed in each case and consideration of the format(s) in which new resources might be published.

1.2 The work relating to part a of this resolution is reported elsewhere in the agenda while this report is concerned with parts b and c. It concerns the order in which different resources are addressed, the format in which they might be published and their level of authorisation. There is also a question as to the degree of revision: the reality is that the time and resources are not available to start with a blank sheet of paper for every liturgy. In some cases, full writing of new resources will be possible and appropriate. In other cases, revision of the existing resource will be the right course of action. In others, it may be possible to say that the existing resource continues to be suitable. This paper makes proposals as to these choices.

1.3 It should be noted that existing provision is not being withdrawn. As part of the rolling programme, the new resources will become available gradually. Further work is needed as to the status of older resources and decisions will need to

be made about whether and how there are still made available. The Conference of 2025 directed the Faith and Order Committee to consider questions of deauthorisation and withdrawal and to report to the Conference of 2027.

1.4 In the Methodist Church, there are three levels of endorsement for liturgical texts: authorised, approved and recommended. The use of a rolling programme and the fact that the resources will not be published in a single book enables a differentiated approach to the status of the resources that are provided. At present, all the resources in *The Methodist Worship Book* (MWB) are authorised as part of the authorisation of the book. However, considered alone, it may well not be necessary for all areas to undergo that level of scrutiny. For example, it is good that the Methodist Church has resources for daily prayer, but is authorisation necessary? It might be noted that the *Methodist Prayer Handbook* is a recommended resource, but it is probably more widely used than the MWB services of *Prayer in the Morning* and *Prayer in the Evening*. This report makes proposals about the level of authorisation appropriate for different resources and consequently what we intend to provide authorised resources for.

2 Format of publication and title

2.1 The intention is that everything at minimum should be available on the website in an editable format and an easily printable format, enabling editing, copying and pasting and printing. In addition to this, other formats can be considered according to need and what is appropriate given the particular resource in question. Obvious examples include printed publication as part of a booklet and presentation files (eg PowerPoint). Other formats could be imagined, for example print on demand and 'print ready' versions – resources designed to be printed locally without further editing/formatting needed. Further work is needed about what wider range of online formats will be possible. All such choices involve resource implications, but the more elaborate options could include a smartphone app and an online service builder tool. At present, all online resources are freely available. It would be expected that printed booklets would be charged for and more sophisticated online formats (eg apps) might need to be chargeable. At this stage, an indication of intentions is being offered rather than firm decisions. The nature of the rolling programme is that other publication formats could be added later, if appropriate and necessary.

2.2 *The Methodist Worship Book* was a clear and easily understood title. In succession to the *Methodist Service Book* and the *Book of Offices*, it clearly denotes an authorised collection of Methodist liturgy. For a set of resources understood

as a collection and available in a variety of formats, how to signify and title the collection is more challenging. Available alongside authorised resources are (and will be) approved and recommended resources. How do we appropriately signal the status and who needs to know? Those accessing the resources (in whatever format) to prepare and lead worship need some indication of their status. As a key authorised worship resource alongside *Singing the Faith*, it is proposed that the new collection of authorised resources be termed *Praying the Faith: Authorised Liturgies for Methodist Worship.* This allows for authorised resources to be distinctively identified alongside other resources and highlights the function of authorised liturgy in enabling the proclamation of the Church's faith through prayer and worship. The Conference is invited to endorse this proposed title.

3 Considerations relating to language

3.1 The question of the languages in which the resources should be available is of signal importance. *The Methodist Worship Book* was fully translated into Welsh and some other, more recent, liturgical resources have also been translated into Welsh. Currently, official provision of the Methodist Church in Britain's liturgical resources is not available in other languages.

3.2 Across our Connexion, Methodists worship in multiple languages. Significant among these are those of the Global Communities and indigenous minority languages (Manx, Cornish, Scots, for example) should also be noted. Careful discernment is required here in order that the Methodist people are resourced well, in ways that reflect the kind of Connexion we are and aspire to be as well as working within our means.

3.3 Provision of liturgical resources is not simply a question of translation. Language does not sit alone in isolation from theology and culture. It will be important to pay attention to the cultural, liturgical and theological traditions of those who generally worship in languages other than English. Common texts (see section 6 of the companion report *Principles for Liturgical Style and Language*) should be considered according to forms used ecumenically rather than re-translated from the English. Biblical texts should be direct translations into the target language, not a re-translation of an English version.

3.4 It is recommended that the Conference direct the Faith and Order Committee to produce a language policy for authorised liturgical resources and to report to the Conference of 2028.

4 The order of work

4.1 The table below uses the headings of *The Methodist Worship Book*. However, within these areas the resources provided can (and will) vary from those provided within MWB, with the potential for both addition and removal. The basic rationale is to attempt to deal with authorised liturgies which are more frequently used first and then come to lesser used ones in as the project progresses. Another factor is to seek to make each stage of the work manageable.

4.2 The table below uses the concept of work stages. These are intended to be smaller projects within the overall project which would be resourced by a specific working group. It is envisaged that a work stage might last for two to three years and up to two work stages could be in progress simultaneously. It is suggested that one work stage be started in the connexional year 2026/27 and the second in 2027/28 so that the starts of new work stages are staggered. Budget provision is being made to allow for onsite residential and day meetings for working groups resourcing each work stage.

4.3 It is suggested that within each work stage there might be an open invitation at the outset (or in preparation for its outset) for feedback from the Connexion as to changes that might be made and what resources would be desirable within the overall heading of that work stage. Once a substantial draft has been prepared, it would be published for experimental use before submission in due course for authorisation by the Conference. When *The Methodist Worship Book* was produced, the Conference delegated to the Faith and Order Committee the ability to commend such liturgies for experimental use and it is recommended that the same be done again. In the case of approved resources, the Faith and Order Committee would also commend them for experimental use, but feedback would return to the Committee only.

4.4 The table below includes seven work stages. It is important to recognise that the rolling programme will take a long time. In the 1990s it was possible for multiple working groups to be working simultaneously and the project lasted nine years from inception to publication. It is necessary to be realistic about the resources available and the associated time implications.

5 Decisions by the Conference

5.1 This report is generally intended to be indicative about the way the project is being approached without wanting to restrict the ability to adapt as the project

progresses. The report is offered to update the Conference as to the work and the plans for next steps. The Conference is invited to endorse the intentions about the level of approval given to each liturgy and to approve the order in which the work stages will be taken.

6 Planned table of work

Work stage	Resource area	Level of revision	Publication format	Status
1	Holy Communion	New resources and some revised versions of existing texts.	Digital and print	Authorised
	Ordination	Revise the existing text	Digital[1]	Authorised
2	Morning, Afternoon, or Evening Services	Consider what kind of resources are needed	Digital	Approved
	Funeral and related services	Substantial revision	Digital and print	Approved

1 Printing of service booklets for specific ordination services is a matter for the Conference Office.
2 The Consultation on Common Texts has published proposals to make some amendments to the Revised Common Lectionary. This work stage has been scheduled in order that the results of any changes should be available. If necessary, this work stage will be deferred while any changes are awaited.

Work stage	Resource area	Level of revision	Publication format	Status
3	Covenant Service	Revise the existing text	Digital and print	Authorised
	Calendar and lectionary	Light revision of existing resource[2]	Digital (and print with HC?)	Authorised
	Collects	Revise the existing text	Digital (and print with HC?)	Approved
	Holy Week	Revise existing plus some new resources?	Digital	Approved
4	Entry into the Church	Substantial revision	Digital and print	Authorised
	Pastoral Services	Revise existing with some new resources	Digital	Approved
5	Admission, Commissioning and Welcome	Revise existing	Digital	Authorised or approved[3]
6	Marriage and the blessing of a marriage	Revise existing	Digital	Authorised
	Healing and Reconciliation Services	Revise existing	Digital	Approved
7	Daily Prayer	Integrate with order for daily prayer in the prayer handbook	Digital and print (if in MPH)	Approved
	Blessing and dedication services	Revise existing	Digital	Approved

3 Services for admitting, commissioning or welcoming persons to roles specified in Standing Orders or created by the Conference will be authorised. Services in relation to other roles will be approved.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

42/1. The Conference receives the Report.

42/2. The Conference endorses the order of work and approval statuses set out in the table in section 6 above.

42/3. The Conference authorises the Faith and Order Committee to commend services for experimental use pursuant to Standing Order 210(10).

42/4. The Conference directs the Faith and Order Committee to produce a language policy for authorised liturgical resources and to report to the Conference of 2028.

42/5. The Conference directs that the new collection of authorised resources shall be known as *Praying the Faith: Authorised Liturgies for Methodist Worship*.