

Basic Information

Title	Ecumenical Report
Contact Name and Details	The Revd. Kenneth G. Howcroft Assistant Secretary of the Conference and Ecumenical Officer 020 7467 5147 howcroftk@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Final
Resolution/s	43/1 The Conference receives Section 1 of the Report 43/2 The Conference receives Section 2 the Report. 43/3 The Conference endorses the signing by the Synod of the Scotland District of the Statement of Partnership.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	For information about two particular developments.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress in response to the Joint Resolution of the Methodist Conference and the United Reformed Church Assembly in 2008• Signing of a Partnership between the Methodist Church in Scotland, the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland, and the Scottish Episcopal Church.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolution 62/2 of the 2008 Conference [Daily Record 6/25] concerning the Joint Resolution• Agenda item 45 at the 2009 Conference <i>Our Ecumenical Calling</i> setting out an ecumenical Vision Statement
Impact	Both reports point to the possibilities of greater working together for the sake of the Kingdom

Progress in response to the Joint Resolution of the Methodist Conference and the United Reformed Church Assembly in 2008

1.1 Background to the Joint Resolution

In 2008, the URC Assembly and Methodist Conference approved a joint resolution which had been proposed by the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District of the Methodist Church and the West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church. Full details of the resolution can be found on the Methodist Church website [2008 Resolution 62/2]. Its main points are as follows:

- to explore further joint working for the sake of shared mission;
- a structure that minimises ecumenical meetings but facilitates diversity;
- exploration of joint structures at synod/district level;
- effective use of resources.

1.2 Strategic Oversight Group

A group has been formed to bring further proposals to the Governance bodies of both Churches. The membership of this Strategic Oversight Group is currently: from the United Reformed Church, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary and the Treasurer; and from the Methodist Church, the General Secretary, the Secretary for Team Operations and the Secretary for External Relationships [n.b. the offices of Treasurer of the United Reformed Church and Secretary for Team Operations in the Methodist Church are currently held by the same person].

1.3 Observers at Methodist Council and URC Mission Council

The Methodist Council, responding to Resolution 62/2 of the 2008 Conference, has invited a representative of the United Reformed Church to be a regular observer at its meetings and appointed a Methodist observer to attend the Mission Council of the United Reformed Church.

1.4 Joint Councils Meeting

The Methodist Council and the Mission Council have agreed to hold a joint meeting from 13–15 October 2010.

1.5 Closer Working Consultation

The Closer Working Consultation was a local response to the 2008 Joint Resolution for those engaged in ecumenical work in the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. It was a consultation, held at the end of April 2010, for members of URC Methodist Local Ecumenical Partnerships, United Areas and other local collaborations.

1.6 United Areas Model Constitution

The new charities legislation means United Areas will have to register as charities and so the Methodist and United Reformed Churches have collaborated in the writing of a model constitution for United Areas. This is the first time United Areas have had a standard format for their constitutions and it means the approval process for United Areas will be much simpler.

1.7 How to Make it Work

'How to Make it Work' documents most of the details of the relationships between Methodist and United Reformed Churches. This site includes a service for the induction and welcome of ministers, a checklist for church stewards and elders, orientation for incoming ministers to Methodist and URC Local Ecumenical Partnerships, a model declaration of intent for a Single Congregation partnership and a paper about Baptists in Local Ecumenical Partnerships with the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. It is available through both websites.

***RESOLUTION

43/1. The Conference received the Report.

2. Statement of Partnership between the Methodist Church in Scotland, the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland, and the Scottish Episcopal Church.

2.1 The talks in Scotland between the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (known as the “EMU” talks), which began on the 2005, arose out of a desire by the three EMU denominations to continue their engagement following the rejection by the Church of Scotland of the final report of the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union (SCIFU) process at their 2003 General Assembly. Informal discussions among the three other denominations following the demise of the SCIFU process established the following aims and objectives:

Aim: Finding and expressing our unity in Christ, locally and nationally, across Scotland.

Objectives:

- To overcome obstacles which we allow to prevent us from sharing Christ’s ministry both locally and nationally.
- To work positively together
- To encourage our churches to learn, worship, plan and act together, both formally and informally, so that we discover our unity in Christ
- To understand and name any hindrances (e.g. historical, ecclesiological and sociological)
- To find ways of sharing and deploying resources (e.g. personnel, property and finance)
- To engage together in the life and issues of Scotland.
- To model effective ways of deepening our relationship
- To engage with and learn from existing ecumenical relationships and experience

2.2 The main EMU group including the SEC Primus, Chair of the Methodist Church in Scotland and Moderator of the United Reformed Church (URC) National Synod of Scotland met twice a year. Already there was co-operation in training, education, mission and church planting. The EMU talks explored how to expand on these, developing mechanisms to enable this to happen. Much common ground was established through the SCIFU process and this was not revisited by the EMU Talks (e.g. diaconal ministry and baptism).

2.3 A consequence of closer working between the three denominations in the area of theological training for both lay and ordained people is leading to an Education Federation being created. The EMU Talks have also identified a desire for closer co-operation on Church and Society issues and the Scottish Episcopal Church’s (SEC) Millennium Goal initiative has been taken up by the other two denominations along with exploring new ways of working more closely together.

2.4 Another significant development relating to the EMU Talks has been the inclusion of the Scottish Episcopal Church and Church in Wales as participants in the “Joint Implementation Commission 2 (JIC2)” of the “Anglican Methodist Covenant”. Previously, this Church of England/ Methodist Church in Britain initiative had not engaged fully with Scotland and Wales, and the EMU Talks acted as a catalyst for an invitation to the SEC to participate in JIC2. As the URC are also participants in JIC2 the EMU Talks provide an avenue for both inputting a Scottish perspective to JIC2 but also potentially taking forward any initiatives which might emerge from it.

2.5 The three denominations continue to work together with other denominations through their involvement in the networks and associated bodies and agencies of Action of Churches

Together in Scotland (ACTS) and other ecumenical groupings. The three “EMU” denominations continue to be fully committed to this wider ecumenism and will continue to work together with others whenever this is possible as well as specifically through EMU, when other ecumenical avenues are not available.

2.6 The EMU Talks reached a stage where it was felt that a more formal expression of the aims and objectives was required. A Statement of Partnership was proposed as follows.

We, the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Synod of the Scotland District of the Methodist Church and the National Synod of Scotland of the United Reformed Church, in recognition of our developing relationships, instigate this statement of partnership. We solemnly declare that we will work for ever closer co-operation in serving Christ. We are glad of the partnerships that have already been established between us and commit ourselves to strengthening these relationships and building new ones. By regular meetings between our various officers, and encouragement to our congregations, we shall work to identify, explore and develop opportunities to share in mission and ministry by continuing to forge stronger ties between us. Specifically we shall explore together ways of:

Being Church and serving God together;

Increasing the confidence of our members to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to others;

Cooperating in teaching and learning about Jesus Christ, and our mission together;

Cooperating on Church and Society issues, supporting community development and taking action together for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor in Scotland;

Sharing in the provision and deployment of both lay and ordained ministries of all the people of God;

Sharing our resources across Scotland to fulfil our shared Christian mission to spread the Gospel.

We shall seek to widen our Ecumenical engagement within this Partnership and with other denominations, wherever possible, so that our working together may be as wide as possible and our diversity not hindered by ongoing dis-union and rivalry. Progress in this partnership will be formally reviewed on a 5 yearly basis from the date of signature.

In signing this statement we affirm our commitment to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and trust in God's power for the implementation of this partnership.

2.7 The Statement of Partnership is meant to be permissive and should energise and encourage relationships throughout and between the denominations at all levels. It is not a scheme for organic union rather an enabling tool for developing ecumenical cooperation.

2.8 The Statement of Partnership was endorsed by the relevant synods. In Methodist terms, covenant and other partnership agreements with a Church (in the sense of a whole denomination) are signed with the approval and on behalf of the Conference. Local and regional covenants and other partnership agreements are signed on behalf a Church Council, Circuit Meeting or District Synod and are not approved by or reported to the Conference. The EMU Partnership is much closer to the latter than the former. It was therefore approved by and signed on behalf of the Synod of the Scotland District of the Methodist Church. A formal signing of the EMU Partnership Statement then took place on 23 January 2010 in Perth Cathedral.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

43/2. The Conference received the Report.

43/3. The Conference endorsed the signing by the Synod of the Scotland District of the Statement of Partnership.