

Faith and Order Committee Report

Basic Information

| | |
|--|--|
| Contact Name and Details | Peter Phillips (0191 334 3896, p.m.phillips@dur.ac.uk) Secretary to the Faith and Order Committee |
| Status of Paper | Final |
| Action Required | For information |
| Draft Resolution | Council receives the report |
| Alternative Options to Consider, if Any | |

Summary of Content

| | |
|--|---|
| Subject and Aims | To advise Methodist Council of the areas of its work on which the Committee will be reporting to the Wolverhampton Conference 2009 |
| Main Points | A short report, no main points necessary. |
| Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function) | The committee reports to the Methodist Conference, and annually provides a briefer report to Council with an overview of the basic contents of its more lengthy report to Conference. |
| Consultations | Faith and Order Committee, Governance Support Cluster team leaders |

Summary of Impact

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Standing Orders | None anticipated |
| Faith and Order | Drafted report |
| Financial | Network Conference but this has already been factored into the new budget |
| Personnel | None |
| Legal | None |
| Wider Connexional | None |
| External (e.g. ecumenical) | The Committee has ecumenical representation |
| Risk | None |

The Work of the Faith and Order Committee 2008-9

A. New Ways of Working

The Connexional year 2008-9 saw a major change in the Faith and Order work of the Connexion. After a number of years in preparation, the new Faith and Order Network was launched at our inaugural Faith and Order Network Conference held at St John's College, Durham on 2-4 September 2008, entitled 'Doing Theology in the Public Arena: Recreating Faith and Order for the 21st Century'. The conference drew together about 100 members of the new network who are organised into twelve resource groups. Both the President and Vice-President were able to attend the event, as well as the new General Secretary of the Conference. Keynote speakers included Bev Thomas (Amani Consultancy), Rev Professor Frances Young (Birmingham University), Dr Esther Reid (Exeter University), Professor Sebastian Kim (York St John University), Rt Rev Dr N T Wright (Bishop of Durham), Rev Dr David Wilkinson (Principal of St John's College). The conference included opportunity for the resource groups to meet together and begin planning for the work of the network in the coming Connexional year. A number of Connexional Team members also attended the conference, which was a huge success. The network will usually conduct its business electronically with provision for a Network Conference every other year. The next Network Conference will be held on 20-22nd September 2010 also at St John's College, Durham.

The twelve resource groups (RGs) resource a smaller main committee which has enabled us to dispense with the additional executive committee. Conference continues to appoint the main committee but membership of the resource groups is managed internally within the network. As we gather more information on how different RGs work, we will need to put in place an appropriate replacement/succession strategy for bringing new people into the network and supplementing where more attention is needed. As such, the Secretary is maintaining a list of names to consider for inclusion in the network. New names should be submitted to the Secretary for consideration (p.m.phillips@dur.ac.uk). The network is currently aware that through this succession process a number of key equality and diversity areas need addressing, specifically increasing the participation of: BME Methodists; those with disability and/or impairment; lay people; deacons; young people. Within this overall equality and diversity policy, members of the RGs will have particularly skills or expertise related to the remit of each RG and the overall working ethos of the Faith and Order Committee, and these factors will guide any process for selection for a specific RG.

The twelve RGs cover the following areas of work: Bible, Ecumenism, Methodist Doctrine and Theology; Worship and Liturgy; Inter-Faith Relations; Methodism: Ethos, History and Theology; Ministry Issues; Missiology and Evangelism; Pastoral Issues; Social and Political Issues; Theological Education and Communication; Interface (Apologetics).

In addition to the Network Conference, the committee has met three times since the Scarborough Conference of 2008. Throughout the year, the committee has been continuing to develop consultative processes for its work – seeking to be involved in major pieces of work within the Connexional Team from the outset rather than coming in at the last minute with requests to radically alter work which has already been developed. The committee is keen to continue to stress this emphasis and to work at new opportunities to share the contents of previous papers produced by the Committee about its ways of working: *What does Faith and Order do?* and *What is a Methodist Perspective?*

In pursuance of the Standing Orders related to its work, the Committee continues to be interested particularly in the outworking of the Ecumenical vision and working of the Connexion and has been glad to work alongside the ecumenical resources and personnel within the new Connexional Team, to continue to welcome ecumenical representatives to its meetings, and to continue to offer

theological consultancy to the Joint Implementation Commission through the Secretary to the Faith and Order Committee.

The Committee has maintained its active links with many other bodies internal and external to the Methodist Church (Church of England Liturgical Commission, Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity and Mission (MAPUM), Churches Together in England - Theology and Unity Group, European Methodist Theological Commission, Faith and Order Advisory Group [of the Church of England], Four Nations Ecumenical Reference Group, Joint Liturgical Group, Methodist Publishing House).

B. Responses requested by Conference

The Committee has offered the following responses to specific Conference resolutions relating to the work of the Committee:

- *Pastoral Care* – Scarborough Conference Resolution 18/2, Recommendation 13.9 to the report entitled *With Integrity and Skill*, invited the Faith and Order Committee “to consider whether now is the time to develop a theological statement on the nature of Pastoral Care in the Methodist Church...” The Committee’s affirmative response to this recommendation will invite Conference 2009 to establish a working party on this subject.
- *Membership* – the Committee has established a working party in response to Memorial 55 (2007). This working party is currently engaged in some primary research on membership within the Methodist Church, as well as exploring our liturgies on entry into the church, the ecumenical implications of membership and the sociological trends relating to membership in contemporary society. The working party includes relevant members of the Connexional Team and an ecumenical representative from the Church of England. The working party is also aware of similar work being undertaken by the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England and the Joint Implementation Commission.

C. Scrutiny and Consultancy Work

The Committee has engaged with the following issues in particular and, where appropriate, offered responses directly to the authors of reports or those providing the lead in these areas of work:

- *Theological Preface on Supervision for the ADR Handbook* – the Committee discussed the preface on a number of occasions, both in committee and through its officers, and signalled some concerns with the process to relevant members of the Connexional Team, including issues about oversight and supervision, and the need to discuss the theological principles of supervision in a wider context than through an appraisal or annual review process. The Committee proposes to work on an appropriate preface to the ADR Handbook when it is needed, but to do a more substantive exploration of the theological principles of supervision at an appropriate point in the near future.
- *Birmingham Diaconal Conversations* – the Committee was part of a multi-lateral exploration of diaconal ministry hosted by the MDO in Birmingham between Faith and Order (Methodist), Faith and Order Advisory Group (Church of England), JIC and the MDO. Centred around *What is a Deacon?*, *The Mission and Ministry of the Church*, and the diaconal ordinals for both the Methodist Church and the Church of England, the conversations sought to explore the similarities and differences between diaconal ministry in the two traditions. It is hoped that these conversations will continue under the guidance of JIC.

- *Probationers and Authorisations* – the Committee was asked to review a paper presented to MCPOC about the possible amendment of SO 011. The Committee re-affirmed that probationers should not be given authorisations where there were no obvious criteria of deprivation. As such, the Faith and Order Committee would want to resist an alternation of SO 011 on the suggested grounds. The Committee wanted to encourage the appointment of probationers, both presbyteral and diaconal, wherever possible to stations where they can continue to test their calling within the collegiality of a ministry team.
- *JIC* – the Committee has sought to provide theological consultancy for the Joint Implementation Commission through F&O members serving on the group, through the Secretary acting as a consultant to the group and through scrutiny and comment of reports and drafts.
- *MRG and the New Hymn Resource* – in line with Conference’s adoption of the *Statement on the Status of Liturgical Texts*, and directly reflecting the processes of authorisation which were used for *Hymns and Psalms* in the early 1980s, the Committee continues to work with MRG as they seek to put together the new baseline collection for 2010. The Committee has put in place appropriate ways to ensure that all texts are scrutinised by the Committee to ensure that “the new baseline collection in succession to *Hymns and Psalms*” will undergo the same level of scrutiny as “authorised hymnody” in accordance with the established practice of the Methodist Church.
- *Hope for God’s Future* – a draft of the report was presented to the Faith and Order Committee for comment at its January meeting and a number of suggestions were for amendment which were presented to the Climate Change and Theology working group. These suggestions were reviewed and the amended report was then presented to the Faith and Order Committee at its March meeting. The Committee warmly welcomed the amendments made to the report and commended the working group for its willingness to engage with the issues raised.
- *Equality and Diversity* – the Committee has been represented on the Equality and Diversity Theology Group through its Secretary and two other members of the Committee. The group continue to work through a number of issues relating to this subject and Faith and Order are seeking to provide appropriate theological consultancy to facilitate the process.
- *Covenant Relationship* – the Committee worked on a response to this report which sought a further clarification of the use of covenant language based on the Biblical use of the term, suggesting that such usage could be used inappropriately to explore relationships on a horizontal plane and between different sections of one body. The response suggested a move towards an appropriate understanding of the relationship between minister and Church as one of specific vocational responsibilities within a more general covenantal community.
- *Job Titles* – the Committee was asked to comment on a Council report concerning job titles for Connexional Team members and raised issues about the exploration of hierarchy and status within the use of titles for various posts.
- *Embracing the Covenant* – the Committee is currently developing a response to the report in general which should be ready for the new Connexional Year.
- *Nature and Mission of the Church* – the Committee has recently reviewed a major response to this report and will hopefully be offering this as the substantive Methodist Church response to the World Council of Churches at the Wolverhampton Conference 2009.

- Bi-lateral *Fresh Ways and Ecclesiology Working Party* – in collaboration with the Faith and Order Advisory Group, and after considerable conversation with members of Fresh Expressions initiative, the Fresh Ways working party and members of the Connexional Team working in this area, Faith and Order has now established a two year joint working party on this subject. It is hope that meetings of the group will begin in the early summer.

D. Future areas of work

The Committee has a number of items on a waiting list for future discussion. Some represent requests for action/response (nearer the top of the list) and others reflect issues which the Committee has suggested need addressing. These include issues broadly relating to:

- Conference Memorial Service
- Youth Participation Scheme - The Use of Methodist Premises
- Ministers of other Churches
- What are our doctrines?
- Theological Reflection on Supervision
- Faith and Order and the Ecumenical Work of the Connexion

Pete Phillips
Secretary to the Faith and Order Committee
March 2009