

The Work of the Faith and Order Committee 2017-2018

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Resolution	53/1. The Council receives the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The work of the Faith and Order Committee 2017-2018
Main Points	Ways of working Responses required by previous Conferences Scrutiny and consultation work Work being brought to the Conferences of 2018 and 2019
Background Context and	The Faith and Order Committee reports to the Methodist Conference, and annually provides a briefer report to the Council.

1. The Faith and Order Committee is appointed by, and directly accountable to, the Methodist Conference. On behalf of the Conference, it helps to ensure that what the Methodist Church in Britain says and does is true to its self-understanding, mission and purpose. It therefore seeks to encourage a deepening of theological understanding, engagement with the Methodist tradition, and shared critical reflection in order to help discern Methodist perspectives and responses in all aspects of the Church's life.
2. The remit of the Faith and Order Committee is contained within Standing Order 330. It is directed, for example, to encourage reflection on the theological implications of all the work undertaken by the Connexional Team, to undertake specific tasks of theological scrutiny, and to stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church. The Committee seeks to fulfil its responsibilities by offering theological consultation for work being conducted throughout the Connexion and theological scrutiny for the work of the Conference and the Connexional Team. The Committee drafts, scrutinises and comments on reports from its own members or from other parts of the Methodist Church, makes recommendations to the Council and the Conference, offers advice on issues related to the faith and order of the Methodist Church, and reports to the Conference. Its roles in offering encouragement and in undertaking scrutiny sit alongside each other, and the Committee continues to give particular attention to how it might best help to stimulate, resource and encourage theological reflection throughout the Church.
3. In this report, the Committee outlines the main areas in which it has been working during the present connexional year and the main items which it intends to bring to the Conference in 2018 and 2019.
4. **Ways of Working**
 - 4.1. The Committee has met three times since the 2017 Conference: in October for a 24-hour residential meeting; in January for a day meeting (in part, jointly with the Ministries Committee) and in March for a day meeting. It is due to meet jointly with the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission in May. The Faith and Order Executive is appointed to make some decisions on behalf of the Committee between meetings. The Committee continues to pay attention to its ways of working in order to provide a theologically rich, robust and also cost-effective way of fulfilling the remit of the

Committee under Standing Order 330.

- 4.2. The Worship and Liturgy Sub-Committee meets according to need, and utilises electronic ways of working.
- 4.3. All reports, questions and communication to the Committee should be sent in the first instance to the Secretary of the Committee. The Committee have agreed a protocol for Faith and Order representation and consultation. As a general principle no one speaks on behalf of the Faith and Order Committee, except for the Secretary, unless they are specifically authorised to do so. Whilst those representing the Faith and Order Committee on other bodies cannot act on behalf of the Committee they shall endeavour to: articulate faith and order perspectives and highlight questions and concerns as appropriate; encourage a shared engagement in theological reflection; liaise with the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee; and make reports or raise issues with the Committee as required.
- 4.4. The Committee continues to explore how it might best work with others in order to seek to stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church (SO 330(3)). It welcomes opportunities for collaboration and would encourage the creation of more opportunities for Methodists to confer theologically together within our oversight structures. It is particularly grateful for early conversations with working parties appointed by the Conference or the Council in order to identify whether the work is likely to involve any issues of faith and order.

5. Responses required by previous Conferences

- 5.1. The 2014 Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the Ministries Committee “to undertake work on the theology and nature of lay and ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain” and bring a report with any recommendations to the Conference of 2018. A report on this work will be brought to the 2018 Conference. It will also include responses to the following Conference directions:
 - a. Resolution 2/3 from 2011. The Conference directed the Ministries Committee in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee to consider the issues raised in the section of the General Secretary’s report entitled “Patterns of ministry: discipleship and mission” and “a fluid ‘mixed economy’”;
 - b. Resolution 35/5 from 2012. The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the Ministries Committee to consider the ways in which the Methodist Church can promote further hospitality, collaboration and mutuality between our orders of ministry;
 - c. Response to Memorial 8, 2014. The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee “to ensure that a review of the role and responsibilities of church stewards and other forms of lay leadership is included in the review of ministry in the Methodist Church”;
 - d. Response to Memorials 2 and 3, 2017. The Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee to ensure that, as part of the work on ministry, it considers the issues raised in the light of the acknowledgement that current practice does not fully reflect the flexible patterns of ministry envisaged in the *Releasing Ministers for Ministry* report.
- 5.2. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, the report produced by the faith and order bodies of the Methodist Church and the Church of England on oversight and ministry, has already been made public. It was discussed at the Church of England’s General Synod in February, and will be brought for debate, but not decision, to this year’s Conference. It can be accessed here:

<http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Mission-and-Ministry-in-Covenant.pdf>

- 5.3. A draft response from the Methodist Church to *The Call to Holiness: From Glory to Glory (2016)* will be brought to the 2018 Conference. *The Call to Holiness* is the tenth report from the Joint International Commission for dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church and it can be accessed here: <http://worldmethodistconference.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/The-Call-to-Holiness-Final-copy-28062016.pdf>

6. **Scrutiny and Consultancy Work**

- 6.1. The Committee has engaged with various issues, projects and Council papers, providing specific responses to paperwork, continuing involvement in the support of working groups, or commentary on the development of reports. Where appropriate, specific responses have been sent directly to the authors of reports, or to those providing the lead in relevant areas of work.
- 6.2. Under SO330(10) the Faith and Order Committee has a specific role in scrutinising all matters directly concerning the faith and order of the Church presented to the Conference by other bodies. Such scrutiny requires consultation with the full committee, and often some collaborative working, and the Committee is therefore grateful for early conversations to establish effective and constructive ways of working and reflecting as the work develops.
- 6.3. The Committee continues to reflect on how it might best support members of the Connexional Team, and those undertaking work (individuals and working parties) on behalf of the Methodist Council and the Conference, to think about how their work might be theologically resourced and what it means to reflect theologically in the context of the Methodist Church in Britain.
- 6.4. The Committee continues to consider how it might best work with others in order to fulfil its remit under SO 330(3) to “seek to stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church”, and will continue to give this attention during the next connexional year.

7. **Work being brought to Conferences 2018 and 2019**

The Faith and Order Committee’s reports to the Conferences of 2018 and 2019 will include the following pieces of work:

Conference 2018:

- Ministry in the Methodist Church
- Mission and Ministry in Covenant
- Response to *The Call to Holiness: From Glory to Glory (2016)*

Conference 2019:

- Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate (including the Liturgical Role of Deacons)
- Theology of Safeguarding
- Revision of guidelines in relation to Exorcism

*****RESOLUTION**

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