



# **SYNTHESIS**

## **TOGETHER TO HOLINESS**

**40 Years of Methodist and  
Roman Catholic Dialogue**





# SCHEMA

The right-hand column gives references to the Reports of the International Commission so as to confirm sources.

DEN	Denver (1971)	
DUB	Dublin (1976)	
HON	Honolulu (1981)	'The Holy Spirit'
NAI	Nairobi (1986)	'Towards a Statement on the Church'
SING	Singapore (1991)	'The Apostolic Tradition'
RIO	Rio (1996)	'The Word of Life'
BRI	Brighton (2001)	'Speaking the Truth in Love'
SEO	Seoul (2006)	'The Grace given you in Christ'

## PREFACE

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## PREFACE

### PREFACE FOR THE SYNTHESIS DOCUMENT OF THE METHODIST-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

At the end of 2006, the members of the International Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council began the preparation of a document that would synthesise the work of eight phases of dialogue, the last phase of which produced the Seoul Report with its title *The Grace Given You in Christ. Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church*. That report was itself already a document drawing together the work on the doctrine of the Church which had taken place over the decades since the first document on the Church was produced in 1986 entitled *Towards a Statement on the Church*.

The decision to produce a more comprehensive synthesis of the entire Dialogue was taken at a meeting with the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in 2005. The Dialogue had been progressing since 1967 and while its reports were always welcomed, they had not been received very deeply or widely in the two ecclesial communities sponsoring them. It also seemed time for those who had first established the Dialogue to review its achievements and to decide whether they wished it to continue proceeding as it had been up until this point. Finally, it seemed appropriate for both Christian communities to make a more formal response to the achievements of the Dialogue, particularly concerning those areas where it was claimed that consensus had been achieved.

To that end, the present synthesis of the eight phases of dialogue has been produced. The order of the document is thematic rather than chronological. It makes clear those doctrinal matters about which consensus appears to have been achieved between the Churches of the Wesleyan or Methodist Tradition and the Catholic Church. There has also been an attempt to indicate where convergence has been achieved to varying degrees on matters which might have been viewed in the past as divisive, even though this convergence falls short of full agreement. Finally, attention has been drawn to matters which clearly need further dialogue and which are more resistant to consensus or convergence; the most significant of these are indicated in italics in the text.

The text is now submitted to the World Methodist Council and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity with the hope that it might provide the grounds for a more formal discussion between the Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council about the Dialogue and its achievements to date. It is hoped the synthesis will witness to the consensus and convergence that has been achieved and point to the further steps needing to be taken which would allow the convergence to be deepened and those issues which are resistant to resolution to be dealt with in succeeding phases of dialogue.

Much has been achieved by the dedicated labours of men and women of both communities over the past almost forty-five years. It seems time to look again at the broader relationship and the Dialogue itself, so that the next decades might be equally fruitful.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This bilateral dialogue was the result of initiatives taken after the Second Vatican Council and decisions made by the World Methodist Council in 1966. The Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council held its first meeting at Ariccia, near Rome, in 1967. Since then, the Joint Commission has reported to its respective churches at five-yearly intervals. Eight reports have been presented so far, each informally named after the city where the World Methodist Council met that year: Denver (1971), Dublin (1976), Honolulu (1981), Nairobi (1986), Singapore (1991), Rio de Janeiro (1996), Brighton (2001) and Seoul (2006). Den 1
2. Roman Catholic/Methodist dialogue has a singular advantage: there is no history of formal separating between the two churches, and none of the historical, emotional problems consequent on a history of schism. Den 6
3. From the beginning of the dialogue, without any glossing over of difficulties, members of the Joint Commission have increasingly discovered the richness of the certain, though sadly as yet imperfect, communion that Methodists and Catholics already share. The ultimate goal of our dialogue is full ecclesial communion - 'full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life'. As we move in that direction, we acknowledge the vital elements in the partial communion we already enjoy, while also recognising the remaining differences on which further work needs to be done. Den 6  
Nai 20  
Rio 111
4. A central place is held in both traditions by the call to personal sanctification, growth in holiness through daily life in Christ. Catholics and Methodists have always held in common, though they have not always fully realised it, what was the conviction of John Wesley, that each human being has a duty to seek holiness and Christian perfection. Methodists and Roman Catholics find common ground from agreement in the universal call to holiness, and share a wide, deep and rich heritage of Christian spirituality. Den 7  
Den 50, 52
5. Study of the historical background of Methodist and Roman Catholic spirituality leads to the conclusion that what has mattered most in both traditions has been the reality of religion as it brings about the transformation of the human heart and mind in everyday life. This exceptional affinity between Roman Catholics and Methodists - in that religion of the heart which is the heart of religion - gives particular hope for the future of Roman Catholic/Methodist relations. Den 56

## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

### THE HOLY TRINITY

6. A distinctive characteristic of Methodist/Roman Catholic dialogue has been a fundamentally Trinitarian approach to the range of issues which have been discussed.
7. Methodists and Catholics both confess the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, affirming belief in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of all that is; in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who for our salvation was made flesh, was crucified and rose again; in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. Catholics and Methodists share a vigorous Trinitarian faith, and a great attachment to the person of the Word incarnate, who calls us in the Holy Spirit to a holiness that is 'perfect love', and therefore 'social', patterned after the Trinitarian life of God. Hon 9  
Sing 38  
Seo 122
8. Catholics and Methodists affirm together that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, the Eternal Word who is God from all eternity. At the heart of our common faith is that Jesus gave his life upon the Cross for our salvation, and was raised from death by the Father to a new and glorious life which he seeks to share with all humankind. This Eternal Word has primacy in the Church. The Word made flesh is the ultimate norm of all the Church's life and doctrine, orienting all that is done and taught in the Church towards the praise and worship of God the Father, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. At the last day, those who live in Christ will be raised into the fullness of his Kingdom, which will 'have no end'. Seo 55  
Bri 16
9. Methodists and Catholics also affirm together their faith in the Holy Spirit, who is God, fully and perfectly divine, and God's Gift of himself to his people. The Spirit is the personal Love of Father and Son, God's transforming love calling all to holiness and working within the hearts of individual believers and their communities to bring the renewal and reformation of which they always have need. The Holy Spirit is the Witness to Christ in the world, anointing all believers for the work of witness and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who reminds the disciples of the message and words of the Lord, and enables them to participate in the saving events of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, leading the faithful from grace to grace. Seo 58  
Hon 8-11  
Seo 59  
Sing 31
10. As Catholics and Methodists, we are inspired and sustained by a vision of the crowning moment when 'there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him' (John Wesley, *Sermon 64 'The New Creation'*). Rio 10

### CREATION AND SALVATION

11. The heart of the Gospel and the core of our faith is the love of God revealed in redemption. All our credal statements seek to proclaim this mystery: the love of God who saves us in Christ. Sing 36

## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

12. Creation and salvation, which is 'new creation', are closely linked. God's purpose for creation is that human beings, opened to the gracious presence of God, commit their entire being to their Maker and Redeemer, and, in communion with him, become renewed in the divine image, in the holiness and happiness which is God's intention for humankind. Hon 12  
Rio 1
13. God sent his Son to save a world marked by sin. All of humanity has been so infected by self-centredness, self-reliance and the search for false Gods that, facing the total holiness of Jesus, humanity is seen as having sinned in Adam. In the midst of this situation of sin, Jesus comes as the only Saviour, to save humankind by his life, death and resurrection. Rio 73, 28  
Cf. Dub 18f
14. Salvation has individual and social dimensions that must not be separated. It involves relationship to God and to our fellow human beings, and the transformation in Christ of both the human person and human society. God's saving work in Christ is not restricted in scope, but reaches towards the whole created order. Dub 11
15. The Holy Spirit transforms the human community into the Kingdom of God, inaugurated by God the Father in Jesus Christ. The coming of this Kingdom involves the transformation of the human community now marred by sin with its resultant oppression and poverty into a community of justice, love and peace. The present work of the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of this transformation. The Christian message of salvation affirms eternal life which encompasses yet goes beyond our mortal condition. It finds its ground and hope in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is life after death wherein the pilgrimage begun on earth is consummated in God's eternal love. Hon 22  
Dub 15

### REVELATION AND FAITH

16. At the heart of our common faith is the historical self-disclosure and indeed self-gift of the Triune God, culminating in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and made present and handed on to successive generations of believers by the Holy Spirit, manifest in power at Pentecost. The revelation of the Triune God is the source of the Church's faith, the Church's mission and the Church's sacramental life. Rio 1, 8  
Rio 4
17. Our knowledge of God is entirely dependent on the Creator's free and gracious choice to make himself known. God takes action to disclose himself, pointing people in the right direction and opening their eyes so that they may truly see him. Revelation is more than self-disclosure: it is God's self-communication – God's self-gift – to human beings. When God is known or seen through revelation, more is gained than information; with knowledge of God comes new relationship, new possibility, even in St Paul's words 'a new creation'. Rio 11-13
18. God reveals himself through creation and in history, especially in the events which made Israel a people. This reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, who in his life, death and resurrection reveals God in a unique way: the divine Word has become flesh in Jesus. That sheer self-gift of God is a word of life to humankind: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16f). Rio 14  
Rio 17, 6  
Rio 2

## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

19. It is the cross and resurrection of Christ that supremely reveal him to us, achieving his purpose and making him our Saviour. When the apostles preached Christ, they proclaimed Christ crucified and risen. When the Church preaches Christ today, it is the same proclamation that is made. Sing 10
20. What is revealed in Jesus Christ, our Incarnate Redeemer, is God's hidden purpose already being worked out through the whole of his creation. God's revelation aims to bring about communion between humankind and himself. The faithful response to God's gift of himself is fundamentally one of grateful acceptance and loving self-surrender. All who have welcomed the revelation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit feel bound to celebrate together the wonderful deeds of God and to declare them in mission to the world. Hon 45  
Rio 9
21. What God reveals through Jesus is apprehended in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. United with Christ through baptism and the Lord's Supper, Christians are called to make their own the faith of the whole community of believers. Such faith flows into mission, as Christ through his Spirit has commissioned those united with him to make disciples of all the nations. Rio 8, 9
22. God's revelation is received by the faith it prompts. Faith includes a living response to the Word which engages the whole person. Such faith grows and produces fruits, transforming human life. While it is entirely God's gift, faith is inseparably a free act on our part and an attitude of grateful reception of God's grace and revelation, and of self-commitment to the Lord who from first to last is the guide of the faithful through the action of the Holy Spirit. Freely given, it is freely received. Rio 27  
Rio 37  
Rio 31
23. The faith that receives God's revelation is a response shaped by the nature and being of the God who gives himself. What is believed and the life transformed by faith are essential dimensions of faith. In the New Testament there is a clear link between the *faith by which we believe*, the *faith which is believed*, and the *faithful action* consistent with such belief. Rio 32, 33
24. Historically, the Church has always expressed this faith in credal form. The creeds are not simply collections of propositional statements requiring only intellectual assent; they also convey the Gospel message in a way that Catholics and Methodists accept as authoritative and life-giving. For both our traditions, what is believed is a matter of glad assurance, leading to a path of faith to be followed. What is believed and affirmed in common must be embodied in the life both of the believer and the community of faith. Rio 34-36
25. Individual believers express this faith as members of a community. Each person's 'I believe' should participate fully in the communal 'we believe' of Christ's Church. Faith is always personal, but never private, for faith incorporates the believing individual into the community of faith. Such faith is both a personal conviction and a sharing of what is held by the community of believers. Faith is neither merely an intellectual assent to what the Church teaches nor a purely emotional personal conviction: to believe in God and the salvation which he has wrought for us is the living response of the whole life of the believer, and changes our lives in every respect; it is personal, living faith. Rio 29, 113  
Bri 37



## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

26. The Gospel invites all human beings to join the first disciples in receiving God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It is in a situation of sin that this revelation is received. In the midst of this sinfulness, Jesus comes as the only Saviour, God's revelation acquires the dimension of redemption, and faith is offered by the Spirit as saving faith, by which those who believe in the Gospel receive forgiveness, justification, sanctification and all the graces that are needed to persevere in God's ways. Rio 28

### JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

27. Methodists and Catholics confess together God's gracious prevenience. Both traditions also hold human cooperation with God in the mystery of salvation to be necessary; we cooperate with the Spirit as we take to ourselves the self-giving of God in the mystery of the Incarnation. The Christian life is a dynamic process of growth in grace, from the threshold of faith (justification) toward the fulness of faith (sanctification). Den 55
28. Catholics and Methodists acknowledge the reality of sin, and yet also and above all affirm the reality and glory of the grace of God. The Holy Spirit is present and active within us throughout the entire experience of conversion which begins with an awareness of God's goodness and an experience of shame and guilt, proceeds to sorrow and repentance, and ends in gratitude for the possession of a new life given us through God's mercy in Jesus Christ. There will be liberation only as God's grace transforms our wills; there will be love only as God's grace evokes in us a response to his initiative of love in Christ. Dub 18, 19  
Hon 13  
Dub 19
29. Justification is not an isolated forensic episode, but part of a process which involves regeneration and sanctification, the participation of human life in the divine. As our minds are filled with the truths of the Gospel, they are transformed, and that transformation brings about new life. Through the hearing of and response to the Gospel, a crucial change of both mind and heart takes place. For a few, the transformation comes quickly, but for most the putting-to-death of the old way of life and the taking on of the new involves Christians in a long process of maturing in love, a costly journey reflecting the pattern of the dying and rising of Christ. Hon 13  
Sing 39  
Sing 41
30. A key concept for both the Council of Trent and John Wesley was that of 'prevenience'. The divine initiative always precedes human action and response on the path to God. In justification, God through the atoning work of Christ restores the sinner to a right relationship with himself. In such a restoration, the primary agency and the consummation are the ministry of the Holy Spirit as he brings Christ to us and leads us to him. When sinners are led to Christ and receive him, they are re-born and given the power to turn away from a life curved back upon itself towards a 'new life', opened out to love of God and neighbour. Hon 14  
Hon 15
31. This is our reconciliation to God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. This is justification: to be regarded as and made righteous, for Christ's sake, and yet also to be put on the path to becoming righteous. All of this is done by the initiative of the Father's redeeming mercy, manifested in the Son's atoning grace through the Holy Spirit's activity within our hearts. Hon 15

## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

32. Catholics and Methodists are at one in their understanding that holiness entails conversion and transformation, being ‘changed from glory into glory’. Bearing in mind the controversy at the Reformation regarding cooperation with grace, it is of immense significance that Catholics and Methodists stand together on this matter. Methodists and Catholics believe that we truly cooperate with God’s grace and participate in God’s life. Seo 123
33. The Holy Spirit sanctifies regenerate Christians, leading them towards perfect love. Life in the Spirit is human life, lived out in faith, hope and love, to its utmost in consonance with God’s gracious purposes in and for his children. As people who live in the presence of the Risen Lord, Christians know by faith the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and are enabled to live as grateful children of the Father. Thus the Church gives glory to the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hon 18  
Rio 26
34. There is a profound affinity between Methodists and Catholics on justification. At Seoul in 2006, the World Methodist Council became associated with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification signed in 1999 by representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church: ‘The Methodist Movement has always understood itself as deeply indebted to the biblical teaching on justification as it was understood by Luther and the other reformers and then again by the Wesleys. But it has also always embraced elements of the doctrine of justification which belong to the Catholic tradition of the early church both East and West’ (*World Methodist Council Statement of Association with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*).

### SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

35. Catholics and Methodists affirm the Bible as the Word of God. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures bear permanent witness to divine revelation, and are normative for all subsequent tradition. In proclamation and instruction, the written word in the Scriptures has primacy over all later formulations of divine revelation. It provides a permanent standard of belief, our primary and permanent norm, to be interpreted authoritatively by the living voice of Tradition. The Scriptures should be read with reverence and prayer, as well as studied carefully in order to help the Church discern God’s will for its life. Den 36  
Nai 64  
Bri 17, 39  
Nai 6
36. God’s Word is spoken to us through the words of Sacred Scripture, and it is Christ, through the Holy Spirit, who opens our minds to understand the Scriptures within the continuing life, worship and witness of the Church through the ages. Seo 55
37. The Word of God is present in Tradition as the communication of the Gospel to new generations of believers. Tradition finds its focal expression in Scripture, and will always be faithful to the biblical message which preserves the proclamation of the news of salvation by the prophets and apostles. In this Tradition, the Word is read, proclaimed, explained and celebrated. Bri 18

## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

38. The polemics that set Scripture and Tradition over against one another are giving way to an understanding which we increasingly share. Scripture was written within Tradition, yet Scripture is normative for Tradition. The one is only intelligible in terms of the other. That there is a harmony between Scripture, Tradition and the Christian life of faith and worship is part of the self-understanding of the Church and integral to the manner in which the Church, in the Holy Spirit, transmits itself from generation to generation. There is a growing convergence between Methodists and Catholics on what Pope John Paul II called 'the relationship between Sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and Sacred Tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God' (*Ut Unum Sint*, n. 79). Hon 34  
Sing 21  
Bri 18
39. The Spirit guides the Church in recognising the Word of God in the Scriptures, so that they become the document and charter of its life. The Spirit enables the people of God and their ministers to understand and interpret the Word in the Scriptures, to transmit and explain it verbally, to hear and receive it with faith. Thus the Spirit writes the Gospel in the hearts of the faithful. Sing 31
40. Since the truth is always Christ's, there is a continuum of faith with the past. In the course of its development, however, the Christian community has gained new insights into the revelation once given. Catholics and Methodists recognise the dynamic character of revelation as the past enters the present and prepares for the future. Development as the fresh interpretation of faith means allowing our minds in each generation to be formed according to the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit who guides the community into the fullness of truth and holiness. The desire to increase faith by understanding and to protect it from variations and deviations has led to the formulation of doctrinal standards of faith and orthodoxy (as in the traditional creeds). There must be growth in love to achieve more insightful knowledge of the riches of the faith; in other words, there must be growth in holiness. Sing 33  
Rio 38  
Rio 39  
Rio 45  
Rio 61

### CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

41. A life in the Spirit is human life lived to the full in consonance with God's gracious purpose, in intimate union with the Risen Christ. Christian experience is faith's awareness of the Holy Spirit's initiative within the human heart, stimulating and guiding the believer to yet more faith and hope and love. It includes the assurance of God's unmerited mercy in Christ, the inner witness of the Spirit that we are indeed children of God, pardoned and reconciled to the Father. The same Spirit also guides the faithful to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and to an ever more faithful obedience to God's rule within the human community at large. Hon 23, 24

## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

42. Methodists and Catholics affirm together the crucial importance of ‘heart religion’, since we agree that Christianity is a communion of believers, a ‘fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’ (1 John 1.1-3). We form a mystical body whose Head is Christ. Our calling is to live together, in the Spirit, that Christ may be formed in us. The Holy Spirit is the principal artisan of our Christian experience, completing the work of Christ by placing his presence in the innermost reality of each human being. God dwells in the faithful, and they dwell in God. This spiritual presence is pure, unmerited gift. It calls the faithful to holiness, brings them to and keeps them in the justice which is of Christ, sets them on the way to perfection, and empowers them to act through the Spirit’s many gifts. Hon 25-29  
Sing 29
43. There are evident similarities between John Wesley and the mainstream of Catholic spirituality. In the Roman Catholic tradition, saints and spiritual masters have stressed the central place of Christian experience, and the Second Vatican Council spoke frequently of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the human person, the Church and the world. Both Catholics and Methodists have found an edifying example in John Wesley’s deeply personal experience of having his heart ‘strangely warmed’ and his assurance of God’s saving presence. Hon 25-29
44. It is in our totality as human persons that God joins us to himself, and we are agreed that our affective states are also subject to the Spirit’s absolute ‘prevenience’. As we seek to be instructed by the Scriptures and by the spiritual treasures of the Christian Tradition, our ‘spiritual senses’ are developed to greater and greater keenness. In the Spirit, we see the Lord, hear his voice, taste his sweetness, breathe the fragrance of his presence, experience his healing touch and the gift of new life in him who dwells in our hearts and speaks to us through the witness and need of others. Hon 29

### HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

45. Both Methodists and Catholics accept the Scriptures, the creeds and the doctrinal decrees of the early ecumenical councils, and hold that all doctrines must remain under the Word of God. *Though Catholics and Methodists share to a great extent a common faith, they are not yet fully agreed on what further doctrinal accord is necessary for the full communion of faith which would unite our traditions.* Bri 22  
Rio 112, 114
46. Methodists have learned from John Wesley to discern between, on the one hand, different ‘opinions’ about matters of worship, about ecclesiastical polity or even the exposition of certain scriptural truths, and, on the other, the essential doctrines of the gospel. Such essential doctrines are: the Triune God; the divine creation of the world and the vocation of humankind to holiness and happiness; the incarnation and the atoning work of God the Son; the work of the Spirit as source of all truth, renewal and communion; the need of fallen humankind to repent and to believe the gospel; the divine provision of grace through word and sacrament, and the institution and gathering of the Church; the summons to love of God and neighbour; and the promise of a final judgement and victory where all the redeemed will share in glorifying and enjoying God for ever. Rio 115

## PART 1: GOD REVEALED AND REDEEMING

47. The Roman Catholic Church is at one with Methodists about these essential doctrines, but emphasises that the whole teaching of the Church constitutes an organic unity; its members are therefore called upon to believe the full teaching of the Church. Catholics recognise, however, a 'hierarchy of truths' of Catholic doctrine; these truths all demand due assent of faith, yet are not all equally central to the mystery revealed in Jesus Christ, since they vary in connection with the foundation of the Christian faith. Rio 116
48. For Methodists and Catholics, therefore, there is an order among the doctrines of the faith based upon their relationship to the core of that faith: the love of God revealed in the redemption. *There is need for further discussion on the identity and order of what are considered essential doctrines.* Bri 23

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

### THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

49. The nature and mission of the Church has been a central topic for discussion throughout the dialogue. There is much about the Church that we say together as Methodists and Catholics, and many elements of the Church that we recognise in each other. Seo 46

### THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

50. The mystery of the Church is grounded in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and of the saving life, death and resurrection of the Incarnate Word. Methodists and Catholics affirm together a fundamentally Trinitarian teaching on the nature and mission of the Church, drawn by the Father, commissioned by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The inner life of the Church is a sharing in the life of God, and the mission of the Church is a sharing in the mission of God's Son and Spirit. Because God so loved the world, he sent his Son and the Holy Spirit to draw us into communion with himself. *Koinonia* (or 'communion') lies at the very heart of the way Catholics and Methodists understand the nature of the Church. Seo 51  
Seo 74  
Nai 1
51. Methodists and Catholics affirm the Church as the people and family of God the Father; the body and bride of Jesus Christ, God the Son incarnate; and the living temple of God the Holy Spirit. The *koinonia* or communion of Christ's disciples is a visible reflection of the eternal *Koinonia* or Communion of the Triune God who is the source, meaning, purpose and destiny of the Church. It is of the essence of the Church to be a participation in this communion of love between the three Persons of the Trinity. The life of the Church is a life of worship, by which believers share in the exchange of love that is the life of the blessed Trinity. Seo 53  
Rio 109  
Sing 53
52. By the Father's gift of the new and everlasting covenant, sealed by the blood of Christ, those who are "in Christ" become "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). By the unitive power of his Spirit of love, the Father draws us into a communion of life with his own beloved Son. In Christ, we become the adopted sons and daughters of God the Father, members of his royal and consecrated family, the Church. All of this is the fruit of the outpouring of the Father's creative and gathering love. Seo 54
53. The life-bringing communion with the Risen Lord is so profound that we call the Church "the bride of Christ" and "the body of Christ". Christ is the true vine, and we are his branches, bearing fruit because he lives in us and we live in him (cf. John 15:1-17). This intimate union with Christ is God's gift to the Church, maintained, deepened and renewed by the proclamation of the word and the breaking of the bread. For Methodists and Catholics, the call to holiness and the call to be the Church belong together. Seo 56
54. To draw all humanity to himself, the Son died upon the Cross, and was raised to new life. He gave us his words and his very self. In order to fulfil this saving purpose, he called into being the Church which is the place where the Word of God is spoken, heard, responded to and confessed. The living Word has made a living community in which men and women converse with God and speak their faith to one another and to the world. Sing 15  
Sing 16

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

55. When there is faithful witness to Christ, people hear through the words of witness the Word of God and know through deeds of love the God of love. To such witness in word and deed all the faithful are called, but not in isolation from each other. To be 'in Christ' is already to belong not only to him but to the whole company of believers that lives by his grace. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called others to be with him in order to embody God's loving purpose for the world. Rio 23

### KOINONIA: CONNECTION AND COMMUNION

56. As with the first community of Christ's followers, and the community of the faithful throughout the ages, the Church today is rooted in the Father's speaking of the Word and the gathering power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is summoned by the personal call of the Risen Lord. He says to each of us: Come to me, Follow me, and Go in my name. We are transformed by the touch of his presence and become new people, ready and able to follow him and to live a new life in Christ. We are sent forth by him into the world to proclaim with joy the good news of God's love for all humanity, and "to make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus' call to communion with his life (Come to me) is inseparable from his call to communion with his mission (Go in my name). Jesus knew he was sent by the Father. If we are truly united with Christ as his bride and his body, and as branches of the vine, we will also be drawn into his mission to bring God's saving love to the world and to invite people to the feast of the kingdom. Seo 57
57. The community of the faithful is brought into existence by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit relates the faithful to one another, distributing gifts among them. The Spirit is the invisible bond of communion (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:13), uniting individual Christians to Christ and to one another, and uniting local church communities with each other in the one Church of Christ. Within the Church, the Spirit is the bond of communion and connection across both space and time. The eternal Spirit is God's great eschatological gift (cf. Joel 2:28-29), giving us even now an anticipation of eventual full communion with the Holy Trinity. Seo 62 Seo 58
58. A visible community which is in *koinonia* with God cannot but be marked with visible signs, however imperfect, of the invisible presence of God the Holy Trinity. Methodists and Catholics affirm together in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church". Unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity are already gifts of God to his Church, marks of God's continuing and faithful presence. But we are a pilgrim people, and those marks are both gifts and goals, already present but not yet fully realised. Seo 65-66
59. The Church is by nature a "connectional society". Both Methodists and Catholics have an essentially 'connectional' understanding of Christ's call to discipleship, to holiness and to mission, always as God's gift and rooted in our sharing in the invisible *koinonia* that is the life of the Holy Trinity. From the first call of Jesus to his apostles, to be called is to be gathered – into local communities (churches) and into one single communion (the Church). To be Christian is to be joined together in Christ, to belong to the community gathered around the Risen Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. Seo 60

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

60. This connectional principle derives from the understanding of holiness common to Catholics and Methodists: like faith, holiness is never a private affair, but a call to perfect love of God and of one another. Communion is grounded in the holy love of the living God; it is a sharing together in a life of holiness and mutual love. That life of communion includes deep fellowship among participants, a fellowship which is both visible and invisible, finding expression in faith and order, in prayer and sacrament, in mission and service. Seo 60  
Nai 23
61. This dynamic of connection and communion belongs not only to disciples gathered together locally, but also to the worldwide community of those local communities united together in the one Church, the Body of Christ. The Church of Christ is truly present and effective in some way in all local congregations of the faithful who are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel and for the celebration of the Eucharist. But to be truly ecclesial, each community must be open to communion with other such communities. Individual Christians and their communities are essentially linked together in a web of mutual and interdependent relationships. What is true of individual Christians and churches is also true of regional and national churches. The one Church of Christ is an interdependent whole, because ultimately there is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism: one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:5-6)". Seo 61
62. Such a connectional understanding of the Church means that both Catholics and Methodists recognise the need for effective pastoral ministries of unity and oversight (*episcopé*) within the one Church of Christ. Catholics and Methodists firmly believe that Christ wills one visibly united, universal Church, even though they may differently identify the structures needed for such full communion. Seo 61

### ABIDING IN THE TRUTH

63. The past, present and future dimensions of God's saving work must be held together. The Incarnate Word speaks through the Church, carrying forward and handing on his saving work from generation to generation. For this service of Christ, the dynamic communion, connection and continuity of the pilgrim Church today with the Church of the past and of the future is essential. The Holy Spirit is the source of our communion with the apostles and the Church through the ages, enabling the Church to hand on the apostolic faith afresh to the world of today and of the future. Seo 82-83
64. Catholics and Methodists differ in evaluating some of the past signs of faithfulness and perseverance, but we agree that God's faithfulness has preserved his Church despite the faults, errors and shortcomings evident in its history. The whole community of faith has been sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit, who preserves within the Church the truth of the Gospel proclaimed by Christ and the apostles. Because of the promised presence of the Spirit, the Church is anointed with the truth, abides in the truth and is preserved in the truth, so that Christians together can be co-workers in the truth under the leading power of the Spirit of Truth. With different emphases, Methodists and Catholics affirm both the human frailty and the God-given indefectibility of Christ's Church. The treasure of the mystery of Christ is held in the earthen vessel of the daily life of the pilgrim Church, a community always in need of purification and reform. Seo 84  
Rio 127  
Bri 118  
Bri 30-45  
Bri 39  
Seo 85



## PART 2: THE CHURCH

All true renewal and reformation in the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit, who enables the community of the faithful to hear the Word of God and to move forward together in life, faith and witness. We affirm together the essentially dynamic nature of the pilgrim Church, which is not only continually in need of renewal but also on a journey into holiness and truth, led by the unerring Spirit of Holiness and Truth.

65. Catholics and Methodists believe that God alone is the absolute Truth. All members of the Church on earth are fallible creatures and sinners in need of the mercy of God. The Church is totally dependent on the active presence of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of its life and teaching. Methodists and Catholics agree that Jesus promised his presence and protection to the Church until the end of time. He continues to endow his Church with the Spirit of truth and holiness. God's faithfulness means that the powers of evil will never prevail against the Church, as it engages in its mission for the salvation of the world (cf. Mt 16:18). Bri 42  
Bri 48

### COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION

66. A key point of agreement between Methodists and Catholics is the need for graced, free and active participation in God's saving work. The first Christians knew they were called to participate in God's mission and to proclaim God's reign as Jesus had done. The Church's calling today remains the same. Catholics and Methodists affirm a common understanding of graced "cooperation" and "participation" in God's work which allows us with St Paul to call Christians "God's co-workers" (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:1). Methodists and Catholics agree that God works through people as servants, signs and instruments of his presence and action. Although God is not limited to such ways of working, we joyfully affirm together that God freely chooses to work through the service of human communities and individuals, empowered by his grace. The whole Church is called to be a channel of God's grace to the world. Within the Church, individuals and institutions become agents of the Lord and thus servants of their brothers and sisters. In all of this they rely on the primacy of God's grace over all human limitations and weaknesses, and on the invisible, active and powerful presence of the Holy Spirit who blows where he wills. Seo 52  
Seo 76  
Bri 49  
Bri 52
67. This common understanding of graced cooperation makes it possible to move towards a common understanding of the nature and mission of the Church which makes use of concepts associated with 'sacramentality'. The Mystery of the Word made flesh and the sacramental mystery of the Eucharist point towards a view of the Church based upon the sacramental idea; the Church takes its shape from the Incarnation from which it originated and the eucharistic action by which its life is constantly being renewed. That the Church is a 'means of grace' is a point of agreement between Methodists and Catholics. Filled with the Spirit of God, the Church is empowered to serve as a sign, sacrament and harbinger of the Kingdom of God in the time between the times. The Risen Christ is present at the heart of his Church, working in and through the Church which he unites with himself as a communal sign and instrument of his saving presence. Only the presence of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the Church to be a sign or sacrament of the Risen Christ for our whole world. Seo 77  
Cf Seo 102  
Nai 10  
Nai 8  
Seo 77

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

68. The Church is called to be an effective sign to the world of the saving and gathering purpose of God for all humanity, and a foretaste of our final gathering by God in heaven. Visible unity is essential, therefore, to the nature and mission of the Church. Seo 62

### CALLED TO MISSION

69. A strong missionary impulse is common to Methodists and Catholics. Faith flows into mission, and the Church's calling to witness in word and life to God's saving work in Christ is fundamental to her being. The nature and mission of the Church are inseparable. The call to personal holiness, the call to unity in worship and the call to mission intrinsically belong together. The Church as a communion of faith is called to preach and proclaim to the world the Gospel of Jesus Christ, "good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (Luke 2:10). Catholics and Methodists are firmly united in the passionate conviction that the Gospel is offered to all. Dub 21, 11  
Rio 9, 123  
Seo 73  
Bri 48
70. The great commissioning at the end of St Matthew's Gospel is addressed to the apostles and to all who will share their faith. The Risen Christ calls on those who follow him to share in his mission. Addressing his disciples, he says: 'As the Father sent me, so I send you' (John 20.21). They are to carry forward his once-for-all redemptive mission in space and time, to all peoples and all ages. Rio 76  
Rio 74
71. The innermost reality of the Church is its invisible communion with the Risen Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's Son is 'the Sent One', and being drawn into the life of Christ will always involve being drawn into his mission from the Father. Communion with the person of Christ commits us to communion with the mission of Christ. This participation in the mission of Christ is possible only because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the Spirit, the proclaiming community itself becomes a living Gospel for all to hear. The whole prophetic people of God, lay and ordained together, is empowered in this work of witness and mission, precisely by the Holy Spirit drawing us into a deep communion with Christ himself. Seo 80  
Rio 75
72. The proclamation of the Gospel by words is an essential task for each generation of believers. Christians also bear witness when they seek to let their light shine before others so that their conduct as well as their words may bring others to glorify God. This personal evangelism contributes to the corporate mission of the Church, and plays a vitally important role in making new believers. Sing 48
73. The Holy Spirit empowers God's people in the work of witness and mission. The whole Church remains rooted in a communion of faith and life with the apostles, their teaching and their mission. Because Christ's followers are incorporated into him through baptism, they share in his priestly, prophetic and royal office, together as a communion and individually each in their own way. The role of lay people as essential witnesses to the Gospel is affirmed in each of our Churches. Bri 35-36

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

74. Christ proclaimed that the kingdom of his Father was near at hand. This proclamation was the heart of his message, and therefore lies at the heart of the mission of his Church. The Church announces the kingdom and is itself a living sign of God's reign. In Christ's name and by the power of the Spirit, the Church serves the kingdom of God by working to heal and transform the world here and now. Seo 68
75. We have been "baptised into Christ's death" so that we can share his resurrection and "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Methodists and Catholics confess together the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The faith that "Christ is risen!" lies at the heart of all that we hold in common. The Church is called to be an Easter community, marked with the joy of the Resurrection of our Lord. Like Mary of Magdala and the apostles, Christians today are told not to look for Christ among the dead, but to proclaim him to the world as risen and alive. Seo 71
76. Every authentic church community is marked with signs of Pentecost, signs of the Holy Spirit. We hear the Lord say afresh: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In that way we truly become a community of faith and love, anticipating and journeying towards our final destiny with and in God. Seo 72

### GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

77. Central to our common understanding of the Church as Methodists and Catholics is the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the transforming presence of the Spirit of Perfect Love. This ultimate giftedness bears fruit in the abundance of gifts and graces entrusted by God to the Church. Throughout the ages, the Holy Spirit has poured out gifts on those who have been baptised in the name of Christ. These gifts are for the service of communion: for the drawing of humanity into communion with the Father and the Son, and for the building up and strengthening of communion among those who believe. Seo 86  
Sing 59
78. Catholics and Methodists joyfully recognise and affirm many of these gifts in one another's communities. Such mutual affirmation is a vital dimension of the desire to give proper recognition to each other's ecclesial or churchly character. Many different gifts have been developed in the two traditions, even in separation. Although Methodists and Catholics already share some of their riches with one another, we look forward to a greater sharing as we come closer together in full unity. Seo 86  
Nai 22-23  
Cf Seo 97
79. Communion is much more than co-existence; it is a shared existence. Mutual sharing is at the heart of a life of holiness. Communion involves holding in common the many gifts of God to the Church. The more these gifts are held together, the more in communion we are with each other. Full communion is realised when we share together all those essential gifts of grace entrusted by God to the Church. Seo 63

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80. All of these gifts together are elements and endowments which build up the Church for its life and mission. They include the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, as well as other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and visible elements. Among these visible elements are the means of grace so central to the life of our two traditions, especially Baptism and the Eucharist as well as other rites which could be said to have a sacramental nature. An essential gift is the apostolic ministry, including a specific ministry of 'oversight' (*episcopé*). Seo 87
81. *Methodists and Catholics are not yet fully agreed on what constitutes the essential gifts, in the areas of doctrine, sacraments and structures. For Catholics, the essential gifts of the Spirit include the historic episcopate in the apostolic succession, and the Petrine ministry of the Bishop of Rome. For Methodists, the essential gifts include Christian conference.* Seo 87, 92
82. We already share together in the Gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of our communion in Christ. Methodists and Catholics are already in a real, though imperfect, communion with one another. They rejoice in the many essential elements of the Church of Christ which they discover in each other's communities. Our communion grows as we learn to recognise God's gifts in each other. We joyfully reaffirm together the words of Pope John XXIII that "what unites us is much greater than what divides us", and Pope John Paul II's conviction that our continuing dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas but in some way always an "exchange of gifts" (*Ut Unum Sint*, n. 20). Seo 64, 107-113, 121-127

### MEANS OF GRACE & SACRAMENTS

83. Christ, 'the image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1.15), may be thought of as the primary sacrament, revealing God's nature and purpose and enabling us to know and serve him. 'The Word was made flesh and lived among us' (John 1.14): God's Son entered human history as one of us, taking upon himself human life and suffering, and became both the sign of our salvation and the instrument by which it is achieved. Sing 89  
Rio 94-95  
Bri 52-54
84. After the pattern of the Incarnation, God continues to make visible the Invisible, using signs and channels of the divine presence. Methodists and Catholics agree that God uses means of grace which are trustworthy channels. As the company of those who have been incorporated into Christ and nourished by the life-giving Holy Spirit, the Church may analogously be thought of in a sacramental way. Christ works through the Church. Bri 53  
Rio 96  
Cf. Bri 54  
Nai 8-10
85. Instituted by Christ and made effective by the Holy Spirit, the particular sacraments of the Church may be considered as instances of the divine Mystery being revealed and made operative in the lives of the faithful. The sacraments flow from the sacramental nature of God's self-communication to us in Christ. They are specific ways in which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Risen Jesus makes his saving presence and action effective in our midst. After Christ's passion, death and resurrection the Saviour continues his words and actions among us by means of sacramental signs. Rio 97  
Cf. Bri 55  
Rio 98

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86. The sacraments are effective signs by which God gives grace through faith. God works through his Spirit in a mysterious way beyond human comprehension, and he invites a full and free human response. They are effective signs of grace because they are not merely human acts. By the power of the Holy Spirit they bring into our lives the life-giving action and even the self-giving of Christ himself. It is Christ's action that is embodied and made manifest in the Church's actions which, responded to in faith, amount to a real encounter with the Risen Christ. And so, when the Church baptises it is Christ who baptises, and it is Christ who says 'This is my body...this is my blood' and who truly gives himself to us. The fruit of such encounters is our sanctification, and the building up of the body of Christ. Nai 15-16  
Cf Bri 53
87. The sacramental life of the Church expresses our communion with God and with one another in a profound way. The sacraments are at one and the same time effective signs of God's fellowship with his people and of the fellowship of the people of God with one another. Rio 118
88. It is by divine institution that the Church has received Baptism and Eucharist, outward signs of inward grace consisting of actions and words by which God encounters his people. Methodists and Catholics affirm the full sacramental nature of the rites of Baptism and Eucharist, attributing to Christ their direct institution. Nai 13  
Rio 100

### BAPTISM

89. Baptism is an action of God by which the baptised begin their life with Christ the Redeemer and participate in his death and resurrection. As Christ is received, original sin is erased, sins are forgiven, the baptised are justified in the eyes of God and become a new creation; with all believers they share the communion of the Spirit, and they are called to seek perfection in hope and in love through faithful response to God's continuing gifts of grace. Rio 101
90. Baptism is irrevocable and is not repeated. While it is received in the context of a local church and in a specific Christian communion, it introduces people into the universal Church of Christ and the gathering of the saints. By baptism we are received into the community of faith. Rio 101  
Sing 46
91. Baptism is given in the midst of the community to new Christians who, at their baptism, confess the faith they have received. Symbolically they are plunged into the cleansing waters where they receive the Holy Spirit and are given the garment of faith 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'. United to Christ in his dying and rising, they bear witness that they are reborn in him. Methodists and Catholics agree that Christians are baptised in the faith that has been received from the apostles and obediently preached by the community and its members. Both Methodists and Catholics consider it right to baptise infants born to believers. Sing 63

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

92. Through the baptismal waters, people are brought into the life of God that is communicated through Christ in the Holy Spirit. This life, being the very life of the divine Persons, is itself a life of communion and involves participating in the bond of love established by the Spirit between God and creation. The baptised become sisters and brothers in Christ. They are constituted as the family of God, sharing in its privileges and responsibilities as a royal priesthood. By baptism, the community of believers shares in the holiness of God, a holiness that is manifested in the Christian life of the faithful. Sing 64  
Sing 65
93. Baptism, the sacrament of faith, is the sign of that new life which the Father gives us through Christ in the Spirit. Christ's death has put to death sin in our lives. The new life that replaces the old is a life of love: it is a sharing in the inner life of God that is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit: 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' (Romans 5.5). This love is pure gift, and in virtue of it we are drawn ever more deeply into the inner life of God and able to cry 'Abba, Father' (Galatians 4.6). It is boundless in its range and scope, directed to the whole world, in particular the poor, the weak and the unloved. Sing 40
94. Catholics and Methodists give full recognition to each other's celebration of the sacrament of baptism. Our common baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is our sacramental bond of unity, the visible foundation of the deep communion which already exists between us and which impels us to ever deeper unity with each other and participation in the life and mission of Christ himself. Seo 78

### EUCHARIST

95. It is Christ himself who invites us to the feast at his table. Methodists and Catholics agree that Jesus Christ instituted the eucharist as a holy meal, the memorial of his sacrifice. As the baptised partake of it, they share the sacrament of his body given for them and his blood shed for them; they present and plead his sacrifice before God the Father; and they receive the fruits of it in faith. Proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes, the eucharistic assembly anticipates the final advent of Christ and enjoys a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all peoples. Rio 102
96. Roman Catholics and Methodists approach the Eucharist without a history of explicit disagreement. Our traditions have indeed developed in separation from each other, but not in direct historical conflict. There is significant agreement on much that is central in our understanding of the Eucharist. Methodists are increasingly recognising that the Lord's Table belongs to the fulness of Christian worship, while Catholics are appreciating the fundamental importance of the preaching of the Word. These developments have resulted in a remarkable convergence, so that never before has the worshipping life of Methodists and Roman Catholics had so much in common. Dub 48-51  
Sing 45
97. The eucharistic devotion of John and Charles Wesley, with their emphasis on frequent communion, and the eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley, provide a significant point of contact with Catholic eucharistic spirituality and teaching and give a possible basis for convergence on the nature of the real presence and the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. Den 9, 79,  
Den 80

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

98. The Eucharist as a sacrament of the Gospel is the fullest expression of God's love in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through it, God meets us here and now in his forgiving and self-giving love. It is the commemoration of the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ, which is the climax of the whole action of God in creation and salvation. It expresses our response – both personal and corporate – to God's initiative in a sacrifice not only of praise and thanksgiving, but also of the glad surrender of our lives to God and to his service. Thus we are united with Christ in his obedient self-offering to the Father and his victory over death. It is our response of faith and love whereby we receive his gift of himself and are renewed as members of his body, that we may be the focus of his presence and the agents of his mission to the world. It points to and anticipates his final triumph, and it is our vision of that hope and our sharing in that victory. Dub 52
99. In the Eucharist, the Word of God is heard in the Scriptures and the proclamation of the Gospel. As Christians receive the sacrament of his body and blood offered for them, they become the body through which the risen Lord is present on earth in the Holy Spirit. As they share his Body and Blood that have brought to the sinful world salvation and reconciliation, they proclaim today the past events of the Lord's death and resurrection, and as they do so they present to the world their confidence and hope that Christ who 'has died and is risen' will also 'come again.' Sing 67  
Cf. Rio 102
100. Methodists and Catholics affirm the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This reality does not depend on the experience of the communicant, although it is only by faith that we become aware of Christ's presence. Christ in the fullness of his being, human and divine, crucified and risen, is present in the sacrament. This presence is mediated through the sacred elements of bread and wine. Within the eucharistic celebration, the bread and wine become the sign par excellence of Christ's redeeming presence to his people. To the eyes of faith, they now signify the Body and Blood of Jesus, given and shed for the world. As we take, eat and drink, and share the bread and wine, we are transformed into him. The eucharistic bread and wine are therefore efficacious signs of the Body and Blood of Christ. Den 83  
Dub 54
101. *An important point of difference concerns the question of the nature of the real presence and the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Roman Catholics do not claim that the physical and chemical composition of the bread and wine are changed, but they do believe that their inner reality (or 'substance') becomes that of the body and blood of Christ. Methodists affirm that the bread and wine acquire additional significance as effectual signs of the body and blood of Christ, but they have been reluctant to explore the manner of any change. These differences may be reflected in the question of the reservation or disposal of the consecrated elements: Roman Catholics practise reservation for bringing Holy Communion to the sick and for adoration; Methodists do not generally reserve the elements but reverently dispose of them.* Dub 49  
Dub 59  
Dub 61
102. The Eucharist is the celebration of Christ's full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, offered once and for all for the whole world. It is a memorial which is not a mere calling to mind of a past event or of its significance, but the Church's effectual proclamation of God's mighty act in Christ. In this celebration we share in Christ's offering of himself in obedience to the Father's will. Den 83  
Dub 63

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

103. *The term sacrifice is not used so readily by Methodists as by Roman Catholics when speaking of the Eucharist. The language of sacrifice is more prominent in the hymns of John and Charles Wesley than it is in the prayers of the various Methodist communion services. When Methodists use sacrificial language, it refers to the sacrifice of Christ once-for-all, to our pleading of that sacrifice here and now, to our offering of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and to the sacrifice of ourselves in union with Christ who offered himself to the Father.* Dub 64-65
104. *Roman Catholics can happily accept all these senses of the term, but they also speak of the sacrifice of the Mass as something which the Church offers in all ages of her history. They see the Eucharist not as another sacrifice adding something to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, nor a repetition of it, but as making present and offering in a sacramental way the same sacrifice.* Dub 66
105. *Thus there are issues which remain to be resolved before Catholics and Methodists can give full mutual recognition to each other's celebration of the Eucharist. These include the precise meaning of the Eucharist as the sacramental 'memorial' of Christ's saving death and resurrection, the particular way in which Christ is present in Holy Communion, and the related question of the reservation or disposal of the consecrated elements. Intimately connected issues are those of the nature and validity of the ministry of those who preside at the Eucharist, and the link between eucharistic communion and ecclesial communion. It is essential that these issues be further explored.* Seo 94  
Cf Den 83f
106. *Methodists and Catholics welcome one another to attend their celebrations of the Eucharist, and agree that receiving Holy Communion is both a sign of existing unity and a means towards the greater unity of the Church, but they are not agreed on the unity in faith required for admission to Communion. Catholics and Methodists should make the fullest use of the provisions in their respective ecumenical legislation, except that no breach of each other's discipline should be encouraged.* Cf Rio 119  
Cf Den 84  
Seo 144
107. *Methodists and Catholics are already agreed that when the Eucharist is celebrated, we hear afresh the Word of God spoken to us; we enter together more deeply into the saving mystery of Christ; we encounter Christ anew in a way which ensures the living presence of Christ at the heart of the Church; we are anointed by the transforming love which is God's Holy Spirit and become more truly the Body of Christ; we are sent forth together in Christ to share more deeply in God's work in our world; and we share together a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. As we celebrate the Eucharist, called together by the Father, the Risen Lord makes us more fully what he wills his Church to be, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Together these affirmations already provide a rich foundation from which we can face the remaining issues in the hope that one day Catholics and Methodists will be able to gather together in full communion around the table of the Lord.* Seo 94



## PART 2: THE CHURCH

### OTHER MEANS OF GRACE

108. Baptism, received once, and holy communion, received regularly, are at the heart of the life of holiness to which the faithful are called. The Church has authority to establish other rites which are sacred actions and signs of God's redeeming love in Christ. Some of these the Catholic Church has recognised as sacraments, since it sees them as ultimately derived from the will of Christ; in Catholic teaching, there are neither more nor less than seven sacraments. Methodists, while using the term 'sacrament' only of the two rites for which the Gospel explicitly record Christ's institution, do not thereby deny sacramental character to some other rites. Rio 104  
Nai 13
109. Catholics believe that in confirmation the Gift of the Spirit seals what was achieved in baptism. The faithful who are aware of sinning and are contrite have access to Christ the healer and forgiver in the sacrament of penance. When they are sick, they also receive in the anointing the healing of Christ. When they marry, they marry in the Lord through a sacrament of mutual communion. In the sacrament of orders, some of the believers are chosen and empowered to act for Christ as Head, Shepherd and Teacher of the Church. In all sacraments the power of the Spirit is at work, inviting the believers to closer union with their Redeemer, to the glory of God the Father. Rio 105
110. Although Methodists do not recognise these rites as sacraments of the Gospel, in the sense that they were directly instituted by Christ, they too affirm the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the faithful, the necessity of repentance for sins, the power of prayer for healing, the holiness of marriage, and the Spirit's empowerment of those who are called and ordained for ministry. Methodists recognise that these and other practices can be effectual channels of God's grace if they are faithful to Scripture. John Wesley taught that we can trust that God's grace is regularly found in such places. They are thus 'prudential means of grace.' In effect, Methodists treat ordination, prayer for healing, declaring the forgiveness of sins, marriage and confirmation as prudential means of grace that have a special status within this larger category. They are not sacraments like baptism and the Lord's Supper, yet they have a sacramental quality. They are distinct from other prudential means of grace in that they are grounded in the practices of the apostolic Church as attested in Scripture. Thus they are properly given liturgical expression in the life of the community of faith. Rio 106  
Bri 59  
Bri 60
111. Methodists and Catholics find significant convergence of understanding about the means of grace. We agree that Christ has promised to be with his Church until the end of the age (Mt 28.20), and that all the means of grace, whether sacraments or 'sacramentals', instituted or prudential means of grace, are channels of Christ's faithfulness to his promise. Catholics and Methodists affirm that baptism, confirmation and ordination are unrepeatable acts whereby God's grace is conveyed to the recipient in special ways. Bri 61
112. *Some of the remaining differences between Methodists and Catholics centre on whether and how such 'means of grace' may be 'guaranteed' or 'trustworthy'.*

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

113. Catholics and Methodists both recognise also other 'means of grace'. These include public and private prayer, the reading of Scripture, the singing of hymns, fasting, and what Methodists refer to as 'Christian conversation'. Rio 107

### AUTHORITY AND ORDAINED MINISTRY

#### ORDAINED MINISTRY

114. Catholics and Methodists affirm together the royal priesthood of the whole Church, and God's call to all to service and mission. Within the apostolic service of the whole community, there has been, from the beginning, a ministry uniquely called and empowered to build up the body of Christ in love. Catholics and Methodists understand such ministry as a gift from God to the Church, a graced service of the Church's living communion with Christ throughout the world and through the ages. Bri 31, 36  
Rio 84
115. The specific charism received by those called to the ordained ministry is among the many gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit. The origins of this ministry are found in the commission that Christ gave to his apostles. Apostolic communities need people to do for their own time what was done by the apostles in theirs: to pastor, teach and minister under the authority of Christ, the Good Shepherd, Teacher and Lord. Sing 60-61  
Rio 86
116. Despite obvious outward differences, Methodists and Catholics have a large measure of common understanding on ministry. The fundamental ministry is that of Christ, whose goal is to reconcile all people to God and to each other, and to bring them into a new community in which they can grow together to their full freedom as children of God. Christ's ministry did not end with his life on earth, but by the power of the Spirit continues now in and through his Church. Christ still chooses and equips people for his ministry, just as he did in the beginning. Dub 77
117. Methodists and Catholics agree that by ordination a person is irrevocably called and set apart by God for special service in the community of believers. It is a special calling within the general calling given to all. By ordination a person becomes a minister of word and sacrament in the Church of Christ. At the heart of all pastoral service by the ordained lies a ministry of oversight for the sake of the connection and communion of the Church (cf. 1 Pet 5:2,4). Bri 63
118. Both Churches understand ordination as a means of God's grace whereby the minister is introduced into a covenant relationship of permanent service in Christ's Church. This specific form of leadership is always a service both to God and to God's people. It is an essentially pastoral ministry of proclaiming the Gospel, calling people to faith, feeding the flock with word and sacrament, and making Christ known. Bri 67  
Sing 86
119. Both of our traditions maintain the New Testament practice of setting apart for ministry by the laying on of hands with prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ordination takes place in the assembly of the Church, and ordinands are incorporated into an existing body of ministers. The person called by God and ordained by the church is commissioned to a lifelong ministry. Sing 80  
Dub 79

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

120. All ministry continues to depend entirely upon God's grace for its existence. The God who calls crowns his call with gifts for ministry, and the minister is to live constantly in the grace of God. As an instrument in God's hands, the ordained minister imparts the Word of God to God's people, both by speech and by the sacraments of the Church. Both Methodists and Catholics maintain the principle that while preaching and the sacraments call for the holiness of the minister, it is not the minister's worthiness that makes them effective, but the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Sing 84
121. Methodists and Catholics affirm the 'collegial' and 'connectional' character of ministry. The ordained minister does not work in isolation, but in partnership and cooperation not only with other ministers but also with all members of the church, who by their Christian vocation have gifts from God for service. The nature of every Christian ministry is to serve, and its goal is to build up in love. Den 94  
Dub 80
122. Chosen from among the people, ordained ministers represent the people before God as they bring together the prayers of the community. Entrusted with the pastoral care of the community, they act in Christ's name and person as they lead the people in prayer, proclaim and explain the word, and administer the sacraments of faith. They transmit what they have received: the good news as taught from apostolic times, the sacraments as signs and instruments of the Lord's saving presence and action, the call to holiness that the Holy Spirit addresses to all. Sing 71  
Sing 72
123. For Catholics, ordination is a sacrament. Although Methodists are accustomed to reserve the term 'sacrament' for baptism and the Lord's Supper, they look upon ordination as an effective sign by which the grace of God is given to recipients for their ministry. Sing 88
124. Catholics and Methodists agree that ordained ministry is a means of grace through which Christ continues to lead and serve his people. By ordination, a new and permanent relationship with Christ and his Church is established. The minister participates in Christ's ministry and acts in Christ's name. Ordained ministry is the ministry of Christ himself, whose representative the minister is. The authentic minister communicates Christ to people. Together we recognise that Christ the Good Shepherd shares his pastoral care with others. In the pastoral care that is extended to them the faithful perceive themselves to be led by the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. Such language opens up the possibility of a common sacramental understanding of ordained ministry as a graced participation in the continuing pastoral leadership of Christ, as an extension of the incarnational and sacramental principle whereby human beings become, by the working of the Holy Spirit, agents of Christ. Seo 90  
Dub 98  
Den 89  
Sing 83  
Rio 120  
Sing 73  
Bri 63-68  
Den 92

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

125. *There is only one priesthood in God's plan of salvation, namely that of Christ himself, which is imparted to the whole Church as his body. Catholics and Methodists have used the word 'priesthood' in different ways, illustrating a difference of emphasis in their understanding of the Christian ministry. Methodists have used it most naturally of the priesthood of the whole Church, Catholics of the priesthood of the ordained ministry. Catholics understand there to be two proper sharings in the one priesthood of Christ, the royal priesthood of all the faithful and the ministerial priesthood of those called and ordained to represent Christ the priest in the midst of his priestly people. This is a subject which requires further discussion between Methodists and Catholics, alongside discussion on the Eucharist as sacrifice.* Seo 132  
Dub 92f  
Seo 132
126. *In the Roman Catholic Church, only those who are ordained to the priesthood can preside at the Eucharist. For Methodists, the regular practice is that ordained ministers preside at the Eucharist, but this does not imply that a Eucharist is not valid unless an ordained minister presides. The rule is therefore held to admit exceptions, when the Conference recognises a situation in which members of the Church are in danger of being deprived of the Eucharist because there are no ordained ministers available, and consequently grants a dispensation to a layperson to preside.* Dub 99-101
127. *The Roman Catholic Church, in keeping with its doctrine and tradition, does not ordain women to the priesthood. Methodists find no theological objection to the ordination of women, and therefore ordain both men and women.* Dub 102  
Seo 97
128. *Ordained ministry is one of the 'ecclesial elements' that we each look for as we seek to affirm as fully as possible the churchly character of one another's community of faith. There is much that we agree upon and include among those elements of the Church which we recognise in each other. We joyfully affirm together that the ministries and institutions of our two communions are means of grace by which the Risen Christ in person leads, guides, teaches and sanctifies his Church on its pilgrim path. The pastors of the community are Christ's servants as he provides grace and spiritual strength to his people and leads them to the goal of their earthly pilgrimage.* Seo 91  
Bri 68  
Sing 76

### AUTHORITY

129. *Methodists and Catholics agree that Jesus Christ alone is the supreme and final authority. To men and women sealed by the Spirit in baptism, gathered in the Church, Christ's authority is mediated through the Spirit, and hence all authority that flows from this source is part of God's good gift. Only an authority given in love and received in love expresses the deepest meaning of the word for Christians.* Den 35  
Hon 33  
Den 106
130. *Christ chose from among his disciples the twelve whom he named apostles. After his death and resurrection, he confirmed the commission of the apostles and sent them out as messengers by whom the Gospel would be preserved and proclaimed throughout the whole world. In Christ's name, they were also to oversee, guide and govern the Church as it grew and spread (cf. 114-115 above).* Rio 84

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

131. Methodists and Catholics agree that the ministry of the apostles was essential to the proclamation and spread of the good news during the first century, and that unity in faith, mission and sacramental life can be achieved only on an apostolic basis. The Church's apostolicity involves continuous faithfulness in doctrine, ministry, sacrament and life to the teaching of the New Testament. Bri 71  
Nai 31  
Dub 84
132. From its first beginnings in the apostles themselves, a ministry of *episcopate* (oversight) has been exercised in the Church. This pastoral oversight has always included authoritative teaching and preaching, for unity in love and unity in truth belong together. As the community is renewed from one Lord's Day to the next, it is nourished by the Tradition it has received, and responsibility for this is especially entrusted to those ministers who inherit the apostolic function of oversight in the community. This ministry of oversight entails solicitude for all the churches, seeking to ensure that the Church remains one, grows in holiness, preserves its catholicity, and is faithful to apostolic teaching and to the commission of evangelisation given by Christ himself. Methodists and Catholics affirm together the place within the believing community of authoritative servants of communion and connection in love and in truth, authorised agents of discerning and proclaiming the truth of the Gospel. Bri 51  
Sing 74  
Bri 51
133. In the early Church, the ministry of pastoral and doctrinal oversight was primarily exercised by bishops. In the Catholic communion, the college of bishops united with the Pope exercises supreme oversight. Among Methodists, it is Conference which exercises oversight with full authority. Within or alongside such structures of leadership, there have always been charismatic individuals whose personal ministry has been vital for the life of Christ's Church. John Wesley himself stands out as such a person. Catholics and Methodists affirm together that God chooses to use such individuals as well as visible structures to touch the lives of his people. Bri 51
134. Both Methodists and Catholics have a strong sense of the corporate nature of the ministry of oversight. For each Methodist Church, Conference exercises a form of corporate *episcopate*. For Catholics, it is the college of bishops united with the Bishop of Rome that exercises such a corporate episcopate. Bri 76
135. The three-fold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon gradually developed in the Church. *Methodists and Catholics are not agreed on how far this development is now unchangeable. For Roman Catholics, the three-fold ministry is derived from the living Tradition of the Church and is seen as fully consistent with the written form of the Apostolic Tradition in the New Testament. Methodists hold that the New Testament does not lay down any one form of ministry as binding for all times and places; they accept, however, the appropriateness of the three-fold ministry in other churches and in united churches. Methodists and Catholics currently differ in their understanding of apostolic succession.* Dub 83-85  
Nai 29
136. For Catholics, succession in ministry is guaranteed only by episcopal laying-on of hands in historical succession. Methodists preserve a form of ministerial succession in practice and can regard a succession of ordination from the earliest times as a valuable sign of the Church's continuity with the Church of the New Testament. Dub 85, 87  
Nai 31

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

137. Methodists and Catholics are committed to holiness in living, to faithfulness in teaching, and to participation in God's mission to the world. Our ministries, both individual and collegial, are means of grace which the Spirit of Christ uses as he wills to keep the Church one, holy, catholic and apostolic in its life, faith and mission. In our human frailty, we trust together in Christ's promise to keep the Church faithful to himself. As a Charles Wesley hymn reminds us, "Fortified by power divine, the Church can never fail." Bri 84

### Teaching authority

138. Methodists and Catholics agree that the Church has authority to teach. In the Church, the revelation of God in Christ comes to us through the Sacred Scriptures and apostolic preaching, and maintaining God's people in the truth is the work of the Spirit. The enduring validity of the Church's credal statements and conciliar pronouncements does not restrict the power of the Spirit to speak in new ways to the Church. Hon 34
139. The Scriptures bear permanent witness to the divine revelation, and are normative for all subsequent tradition. At different moments in history, however, it is sometimes necessary to clarify the contents of the Christian faith, and even to define the limits of orthodoxy. It is the common belief of our churches that there are those who are authorised to speak for the Church as a whole and who, having carefully listened to Scripture and Tradition, and to the experience of believers, may say 'It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' (Acts 15.38). For this reason the Church convenes in Councils whose purpose is to bring into sharper focus various aspects of Christian belief. Properly understood, the decisions of the ecumenical councils which met in the first centuries command assent throughout the whole Church, and there is no reason to think that at the end of the patristic era God stopped enabling his Church to speak in such a way. Rio 67  
Nai 64-65
140. The whole Church is endowed with the Spirit of Truth, and it is the whole Church, in different ways and through different gifts, that the Spirit leads into all truth. Catholics and Methodists both understand that the whole Church must be involved in discernment and teaching, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Lay people and ordained ministers share this responsibility, but in different ways. Both Churches understand that while the gift of discernment belongs to the whole Church, ordained ministers in the due exercise of their office play a special role. Maintaining unity in the Truth is central to the particular ministry of *episcopate*. Methodists and Catholics differ, however, in understanding how this ministry is exercised in the Church. Bri 29  
Cf Bri 118  
Bri 77  
Sing 93-94
141. Methodists recognise the guidance of the Holy Spirit in Methodist Conferences. Although they do not ascribe to them a guaranteed freedom from error, they accept their teaching as authoritative when it is clearly shown to be in agreement with Scripture, and regard Conference as the final authority for the interpretation of doctrine. As with John Wesley and his preachers, Conference looks first to the testimony of Scripture, but also to the treasures of Christian tradition and the experience of those engaged in evangelism, and reflects rationally on the questions faced. Bri 117  
Rio 70  
Cf Rio 130

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142. The Catholic Church recognises the presence of the Spirit especially in the ‘sure charism of truth’ which it believes is given to the college of bishops, and in their teaching guided by that charism. The authority of ecumenical councils derives from this charism of teaching and discernment which the Spirit gives for the building up of the body. The college of bishops exercises its teaching ministry through discerning the faith of Christians, present and past, and always with reference to the supreme norm of the Scriptures. Catholics believe that the bishops of the Church enjoy the special assistance of the Holy Spirit when, by a collegial act with the Bishop of Rome in an ecumenical council, they define doctrine to be held irrevocably. Such teaching is understood as preserved from error by the Holy Spirit’s gift of infallibility with which the Church is endowed, and is therefore binding. This teaching office is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. Bri 117  
Nai 66-68
143. Methodists currently do not accept Catholic teaching on infallibility, especially as it seems to imply a discernment of truth which exceeds the capacity of sinful human beings. They always accept what can clearly be shown to be in agreement with the Scriptures, and the final judge of this agreement must be the assent of the whole People of God. Nai 72-73
144. One criterion by which new developments in Christian teaching and living may be judged consonant with the Scriptures is their long-term reception by the wider Church. In every case, reception of what is true is a spiritual process, and calls for careful listening to the insights of others. Only the truth itself brings about conformity to Christ in the Spirit. Rio 59  
Bri 24
145. Convergence in thinking about God’s preserving of the Church in the truth (cf. n. 63 above) and even infallibility may perhaps be furthered by considering the Methodist doctrine of assurance, whereby believers receive from the Holy Spirit an assurance of their redemption through the atoning death of Christ. Catholics and Methodists are agreed on the need for an authoritative way of being sure, beyond doubt, concerning God’s action insofar as it is crucial for our salvation. Nai 74-75  
Cf. Seo 134
146. *There remain differences between Methodists and Catholics concerning what part lay people have in the process of authoritative discernment and proclamation of the Gospel. Catholics locate the authoritative determination of teaching in the college of bishops with the Bishop of Rome at its head. Methodists locate that same authority in Conference, where lay people sit in significant numbers, with full rights of participation and decision-making. Both Catholics and Methodists recognise the role of the laity in the development of the faith through living it, preaching and teaching it, and meditating upon it.* Bri 78  
Cf. Seo 115  
Bri 119
147. *One reason for this variation in practice is a different interpretation of the effect of the rite of ordination, which is linked to the Catholic understanding of the sacramentality of that rite. Christ has promised his presence and his Spirit to the Church, but the implications of this for a fuller understanding of ordained ministry and of authoritative teaching need further exploration together. A significant point of divergence is the idea of a guaranteed or ‘covenanted’ means of grace, and the grounding this gives to the Roman Catholic understanding of the teaching authority of the college of bishops united with the Pope.* Bri 120  
Bri 82

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148. Both Catholics and Methodists affirm that in calling people to be agents in discerning what is truly the Gospel, God is using them as means of grace, trustworthy channels. All forms of ministry are communal and collegial. They seek to preserve and strengthen the whole community of faith in truth and in love, in worship and in mission. In both Churches, oversight is exercised in a way which includes pastoral care and authoritative preaching and teaching. Methodists and Catholics can rejoice that the Holy Spirit uses the ministries and structures of both Churches as means of grace to lead people into the truth of the Gospel of Christ. The authority which Jesus bestows is the authority for mission. Bri 81
149. Methodists and Catholics agree that teaching authority rightly exercised is a gift of God to his Church, through which Christ exercises the headship of his body by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the United Methodist Church's *Book of Discipline*, "The heart of Christian ministry is Christ's ministry of outreaching love." This is especially true of any ministry of authoritative leadership among Christians. John Wesley's use of the phrase "watching over one another in love" challenges all individual ministers and collegial bodies, especially those exercising the ministry of oversight. Bri 83
150. Moreover, Catholics and Methodists share a common belief in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the use by the Spirit of recognized bodies for teaching authoritatively to ensure the truth of the Gospel which is believed by both Methodists and Catholics. Both, in practice, depend upon the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit. Bri 121

### PETRINE MINISTRY

151. It is Roman Catholic teaching that to ensure the indivisible unity of the episcopate, Jesus Christ set St Peter above his fellow apostles as a fundamental principle of unity of faith and communion. This is basic to Catholic belief in the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, a primacy to be exercised in collegial relation with the other bishops of the Church. For Methodists, the concept of primacy is unfamiliar, even if historically John Wesley exercised a kind of primacy in the origins of the Methodist Church, in the context of his Conference of preachers; today's Conference continues to embody certain elements of this function. Nai 36-37
152. Methodists and Catholics can agree that Simon Peter had a special position among the Twelve, and that certain sayings in the Gospels point to a distinctive role for Peter within the Church as found in the New Testament. Nai 41f
153. In Catholic understanding, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is not established from the Scriptures in isolation from the living Tradition. When an institution cannot be established from Scripture alone, Methodists consider it on its intrinsic merits, as indeed do Roman Catholics; but Methodists give less doctrinal weight than Catholics to long and widespread tradition. Nai 55
154. For Roman Catholics, being in communion with the See of Rome has served as a touchstone of belonging to the Church in its fullest sense, and reconciliation with the See of Rome is a necessary step towards the restoration of Christian unity. Methodists accept that whatever is properly required for the unity of the whole of Christ's Church must by that very fact be God's will for his Church. All local Nai 56-58  
Nai 58



## PART 2: THE CHURCH

churches need a ministry of governance and leadership, and the question arises whether the whole Church needs a leader to exercise a unifying role in service to the worldwide *koinonia*. A universal primacy might well serve as focus of and ministry for the unity of the whole Church.

155. Catholics believe that each bishop is a focus of unity in his own diocese, and that the bishop of Rome, the Pope, is a focus of unity in the communion of dioceses of the whole Church. In order to be able to serve as the visible source and foundation of the unity of the whole Church, the Pope has ordinary and immediate jurisdiction throughout the Church. Cf. Nai 61
156. Catholics also believe that when, as teacher and pastor of all the faithful, and in carefully defined and limited circumstances, the Pope defines a particular matter of faith or morals, his act of teaching is preserved from error by the Holy Spirit. Nai 68-71
157. *It is unlikely in the foreseeable future that Methodists will readily accept terms such as infallibility and universal, immediate jurisdiction with regard to the Petrine ministry.* The general idea, however, of a universal service of unity within the Church, a primacy of charity mirroring the presence and work in the Church of the Spirit who is love, may well be a basis for increased understanding and convergence. Hon 36  
Cf. Seo 113  
Nai 58-59,  
62, 72
158. *Clearly, increasing mutual understanding and growth between Catholics and Methodists on questions of ordained ministry and authority does not exclude the fact that there are areas of serious divergence which require further exploration and discussion. Central to Methodist teaching on the Church is the role of Christian conference in which lay people alongside ordained ministers authoritatively discern the will of God and the truth of the Gospel. There remain aspects of teaching and ecclesial elements which Catholics regard as essential to what we must hold in common in order to have full communion and to be fully the Church of Christ. These include a precise understanding of the sacramental nature of ordination, the magisterial role of the episcopate in the apostolic succession, the 'assurance' asserted of certain authoritative acts of teaching, and the place and role of the Petrine Ministry.* Seo 92

### MARRIAGE

159. Methodists and Catholics find much common ground on Christian marriage and family life. We agree that the well-being of the individual person and of society as a whole is intimately linked with marriage and family life. Married life is a holy and honourable estate instituted by God for the mutual love and sanctification of men and women, as well as the rearing and education of children. We agree that a marriage between two baptised Christians is a voluntary union for life of one man to one woman to the exclusion of all others, so that they become one flesh (Matthew 19.6) and as such a sign of God's fidelity to his people and symbol of the unity between Christ and his Church (Ephesians 5). Den 71

## PART 2: THE CHURCH

160. While Catholics speak of marriage as a sacrament and Methodists do not, both our Churches affirm that Christian marriage is a sign of a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman. Marriage is sacramental in nature because it is the living and life-giving union in which the covenantal love of God is made present (cf. Ephesians 5.21-34). Because marriage is a sacramental covenant, it is a living, prophetic sign to all people. The love and life of a married couple is a particular visible expression of the universal loving kindness and fidelity of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hon 49  
Hon 50  
Hon 56
161. It is not only the wedding but the whole marriage that is sacramental. The spouses' relationship, their continual, lived, total giving and sharing, is a genuine sign of God's love for us, Christ's love for the Church. The entire marriage lived by the couple is what constitutes its ecclesial witness. Hon 49  
Hon 51
162. For the Christian, marriage demands commitment, fidelity and permanence. The spouses' committed love for one another is rooted in their love for God and his love for them. Their communion is made possible by the God who loves them first. Marital fidelity is a self-giving that creates a community of love and life and a deeper mutual trust in which there can be greater freedom and openness to others. Such faithfulness is anchored in God who makes faithful marriage possible. Hon 53
163. The bond of Christian marital union between man and woman is holy by its nature. Through their commitment to marital partnership, the spouses pledge themselves to love and serve one another in Christ. Marriage likewise is ordered to the procreation and education of children. The marital union thus grows into the unit of the family. Here the marriage partners are associated with the creative work of God who has blessed and charged man and woman at the beginning: 'Be fruitful and multiply.' Hon 55
164. *Catholics and Methodists subscribe to this teaching on Christ's will for matrimonial permanence and fidelity, and this despite different approaches to the problems of marital breakdown. Methodists and Catholics have different views on the possibility of divorce and re-marriage when a marriage irrevocably breaks down.* Hon 54  
Den 75

## PART 3: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

### ETHICAL ISSUES

165. The Christian vocation is heard in the teaching of Christ, the Saviour, who instructed his disciples to 'be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5.48). The perfection of God is his love, for God is love (1 John 4.8,12). The Christian is aware that discipleship of Jesus means imitation of him whose love was so great that he did not hesitate to lay down his life. Together we acknowledge ourselves as under the imperatives of love that follow from the summons to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, in our lives and in the world, and to pursue more effective ways of expressing our faith, hope and love in and to the world for which Christ died. Hon 39  
Hon 42
166. Belief and behaviour, faith and works, should not be separated. Issues of ethics and morality, which involve the relation between conscience and authority, are not peripheral to but at the heart of the faithful hearing of the Gospel. Hon 42
167. Whether conscience is a separate faculty or the mobilising of all our faculties to discern good and shun evil, Catholics and Methodists agree that the human capacity we call conscience is the gift of God and is of vital significance for the human life. Hon 43
168. Christians have a duty to obey the voice of conscience, as one of the ways God speaks to human beings, and to respect the conscience of others. Conscience itself needs to be enlightened, instructed, corrected, and informed by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures and the discipline of the Church. Nor can individual conscience be isolated from the mind of the whole Church. No-one's conscience is an island, entire of itself. People have both the responsibility to see that their conscience is open to authoritative guidance and the right freely and faithfully to follow that conscience. Den 104
169. Catholics and Methodists agree that authority in the Church is at the service of the Gospel and that the assent of faith is freely given. Christian conscience is formed within the life of the Church, which is the life of the Spirit. Thus ecclesial authority and individual conscience witness to each other. Cf. Hon 37
170. We are agreed in asserting the importance of natural law which God himself enables us to perceive. In this perception, the supernatural gift of prevenient grace plays a major part. The natural law which is thus discerned stems from the generous provision of the Creator God. Moral theologies based on natural law and those which appeal more directly to revelation need not be in conflict. Hon 45
171. *Despite this broad measure of agreement, there exist significant differences between our respective Churches on a number of ethical issues.*
172. Catholics and Methodists agree that human sexual intercourse has two equal and inter-related functions, namely fostering love, affection, unity and fidelity between husband and wife as well as that of reproduction. Under the stress and strain of contemporary social and economic conditions, parents have a right and duty before God to decide the number of children they may bear, support, rear and educate. *How this decision is to be implemented is a moral matter, and there* Den 76

## PART 3: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

*exist differences between the official positions of our respective Churches on the application of contraceptive methods by responsible parents.*

173. We agree that the Holy Scripture affirms the sacredness and dignity of human life, and that we have a duty and obligation to defend, protect and preserve it. *Our two churches are confronted with complex moral issues relating to abortion, and with wide differences between them in their teaching and interpretation which will require attention in our future dialogue.* Den 77
174. While there are differences between Methodists and Catholics on certain moral issues, there is much that can be affirmed together. For example, both reject voluntary euthanasia, while recognising that doctors attempting the adequate control of pain have occasionally to use treatment which has the side effect of shortening life. Both churches stress the need for pastoral care of the chronically sick and dying as the ultimate answer to the problem of euthanasia. Dub 44-46
175. Conformity, in deep conviction, to Christian doctrinal and moral truth bears fruit in holiness. It produces that spiritual holiness which John Wesley often described as 'walking even as Christ walked'. Rio 60

### CHRISTIAN HOPE AND SOCIAL HOLINESS

176. People who have experienced God's faithfulness and righteousness will share what they have received by deeds of mercy and justice. They will seek to shape society according to the pattern of the kingdom of God. Theirs is the fellowship of the new creation, of which they have received a foretaste by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Never claiming to build the kingdom by their own efforts, they will give all the glory to God. Rio 79
177. The Christian hope is that humanity will one day be gathered into Christ when the Gospel has been preached to all nations. In the widest sense of the mission of the Church, there is a mandate to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners, welcome the stranger (Matthew 25.31-46). Sing 47
178. Social concern is a fruit of faith. As an essential aspect of our calling, Catholics and Methodists are committed to serve the poor and oppressed of our time, and they understand the Church as an instrument in bringing God's peace and justice to all God's people. As Christ reached out to touch and restore the lives of the outcasts of his society, so the Church is called to reach out in his name to touch and transform the lives of the untouchables and marginalised of our world. The service of charity is an essential part of the Church's mission. Having experienced the loving mercy of God, the Church feels bound to denounce injustice and oppression, to work for peace, and to articulate the ethical consequences of God's love for humankind. To all cultures, the Church is to offer the 'leaven' of the Gospel. Dub 20  
Seo 69  
Rio 52
179. Christ called his disciples to be servants of all (Mark 9:35). As a communal sign of the crucified Christ in our world, the Church is called to a life of self-giving love which seeks always to serve rather than be served; to a life of humble and self-emptying *diakonia* which involves washing the feet of those among whom we live; to sharing the sorrow of God's people and suffering with them in communion with the Suffering Servant who was led like a lamb to the slaughter. Seo 69-70

## PART 3: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

180. The power and presence of the Holy Spirit lead the faithful from grace to grace. As the Holy Spirit leads them to reflect on their memory of Christ, to partake of his memorial, and to experience Christ as a present reality, they are opened to God's purpose both for themselves and for the whole of creation. The Spirit inspires them to pray and strive for the welfare of all of God's creatures, and so to protect and promote the habitat that God has given them. In ways that are known to God alone, the Spirit is also present and active among those who have not heard the Gospel or have not believed it. The Christian believers trust in God's hidden action transforming the world according to God's ultimate purpose. Sing 32
181. The Christian hope, nurtured by the Spirit, looks further than this earth and the present life. It looks towards the eternal Kingdom, where God reigns among the saints of all ages and nations and tongues. In this final transformation, the Spirit will bring to an end the trials of the Church on earth, the sufferings of the saints, and will bring the elect into the glory that the Father has reserved for those who love him. Catholics and Methodists hold in common a glorious shared vision of the life after death when Jesus Christ shall be all in all. Sing 32  
Den 49

### MARY AND THE SAINTS

182. While all the baptised make up 'the communion of Saints', they also recognise the conspicuous presence of divine grace in specific persons whose lives and example testify, even to the shedding of their blood for Jesus, to the transforming action of the Spirit of God in every generation. The 'cloud of witnesses' transcends denominational barriers. Sing 66
183. The saints who have passed into the fullness of the mystery of God's grace are forever part of the Christian community. The witness and examples of the past continues to be cherished, and the saints in heaven are held as instances of Christ's 'closest love' and as present tokens of the ultimate fulfilment of all God's promises. Sing 75
184. *For Roman Catholics, devotion to Mary is an integral and important part of their Christian experience and of 'Life in the Spirit'. For Methodists, the dogmatic status of Catholic doctrines concerning the Mother of the Lord remains an issue of serious disagreement between the two traditions. Mary and the saints remains a topic for future dialogue between Catholics and Methodists.* Den 63

### SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

185. The faith of the Christian community is expressed in its worship. In the liturgical assembly, the Gospel is preached, the sacraments are celebrated, the faithful are one in prayer, blessings are shared, spiritual gifts exchanged, insights communicated, pains and sufferings softened by compassion, hopes placed in common. As they go from worship into the world, the faithful are one not only in faith and belief, but also in love. Bri 26
186. In the presence of the self-revealing God, people feel awe and joy, and are moved to express this in praise, prayer, confession and commitment. The Scriptures amply attest the centrality of private and public worship for God's people. Rio 49, 50

## PART 3: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

187. A Methodist ideal is expressed in the phrase 'a theology that can be sung'. Roman Catholics can appreciate that the hymns of Charles Wesley, a rich source of Methodist spirituality, find echoes and recognition in the Catholic soul. Den 9 Cf. Seo 123
188. There is much in common at the heart of Methodist and Catholic prayerful devotion, for example devotion to the five wounds of the crucified and risen Lord, and Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At the core of all such devotion is a desire to grow in holiness as perfect love in intimate union with the Risen Christ. Den 68 Cf. Seo 111

## CONCLUSION

189. Methodists and Catholics reaffirm together the final words of the first Report of the Joint Commission, in 1971: "We know only too well that the latter stages of the ecumenical dialogue are more formidable than the early ones, requiring of us redoubled efforts and devotion, not merely to the work we have to do together, the joint witness to great Christian values that we must give and widely promote in our Churches, but to the tasks of educating our people and communicating to them something of the joys and inspiration that have been vouchsafed to us. As we look to the future, therefore, we renew our commitments and reaffirm our confidence in God's providential leading, in which we have already been so richly blessed." Den 131
190. As companions on the way to the fullness of the kingdom of the Triune God, Methodists and Catholics affirm their common conviction that the whole community of believers is called together by God our Father, placed under the lordship of the Risen Christ, united with Christ as his Body, and has the Holy Spirit as the source of its unity of life, worship and witness. In the Father's purpose for the Church, each and every believer is to participate in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, bringing God's outgoing, all-embracing and transforming love to all humanity. Bri 48





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