

60A. SUPPLEMENTARY ECUMENICAL REPORT

Basic Information

Title	Supplementary Ecumenical Report
Contact Name and Details	The Revd Kenneth G Howcroft Assistant Secretary of the Conference and Ecumenical Officer 020 7467 5147 howcroftk@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Final
Resolutions	<p>60A/1. The Conference receives the Supplementary Report.</p> <p>60A/2. <i>(replacing Resolution 60/3)</i> The Conference receives the Interim Report of the Joint Implementation Commission entitled “Moving Forward in Covenant”, commends it for study and directs the Faith and Order Committee and the Methodist Council to consider the issues raised in it.</p> <p>60A/3. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraphs 8-12 of the Supplementary Ecumenical Report and amends Standing Orders 334, 412 and 434.</p> <p>60A/4. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraphs 13-16 of the Supplementary Ecumenical Report and directs the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, to undertake further work to clarify, develop and open up new ways in which people exercising authorised ministry in a Church with which the Methodist Church has a close partnership, where that Church-to-Church partnership is embodied in local partnerships, can be automatically granted recognition and authorisation to serve in and on behalf of the Methodist Church.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	For information about further developments.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to <i>Moving Forward in Covenant</i> • Standing Orders concerning Ecumenical Partnerships • Standing Orders concerning the authorisation of ministers of other Churches
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 60 <i>Ecumenical Report</i> in this Agenda.

1. Paragraph 4.1 of the Ecumenical Report to the Conference of 2011 [Item 60 in Volume 3 of the Agenda] noted that the interim report of the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) under the Covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England entitled *Moving Forward in Covenant* is published separately but as a part of this Agenda. That report had to be written and go to press before the meeting of the JIC on 8 June 2011. At that meeting it was agreed that an additional report should be written to introduce the report to the Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England respectively. The first section below is the result, and reflects what is being presented to the Synod. In the light of it Resolution 60/3 will be withdrawn, and replaced by Resolution 60A/2 below. The following two later sections introduce some recommendations supported by the Methodist Council which relate not just to the proposals of the JIC but to other ecumenical situations.

Introduction to *Moving Forward in Covenant*

2. The Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) was set up by the Synod and the Methodist Conference when they endorsed the Covenant proposals in 2003. The first phase of the JIC came to an end in July 2008 when the JIC delivered its quinquennial report *Embracing the Covenant*. JIC2 was set up by the Conference and the Synod in July 2008. JIC2 is required to make its quinquennial report in July 2013. As in the previous quinquennium, the JIC is making an interim report to both bodies.
3. *Moving Forward in Covenant* looks back to the origins of the Methodist movement within the Church of England, as an aspect of the Evangelical Revival. It recapitulates why the Covenant was needed and what it has achieved. It notes some causes for concern in the implementation of the Covenant, including ecumenical inertia in some parts of both churches. The report summarises the proposals in *Embracing the Covenant*. The report then majors on two constructive areas of mutual engagement: the Diaconate and local unity in mission. It summarises the results of a joint consultation, sponsored by the JIC, on diaconal ministry, noting areas of convergence.
4. Finally, it sets out proposals for Covenanted Partnerships in Extended Areas. These are designed to facilitate shared ministry and mission in an extended area, wider than a Parish or local Methodist Church, where that is desired and diocesan bishops and the relevant authorities in the Methodist Church give permission. In principle, the extended area could be as wide as a Diocese or District, though the report recognises that not all Parishes, local Methodist Churches or Circuits may wish to participate at a given time.
5. These proposals do not of themselves produce the sort of interchangeability of ministries that would accompany a united Church with a single system of governance and oversight. The phrase 'interchangeability of ministries' usually refers to a situation in which the ordained ministers of one Church are eligible to be appointed to ministerial offices in the other without undergoing re-ordination. The canonical norm for the Church of England is that the sacraments are celebrated and the cure of souls exercised by an episcopally ordained priest. That norm is upheld in all the ecumenical work undertaken under the aegis of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity. However the Ecumenical Canons of the Church of England, and certain ecumenical agreements that the Church of England has made with churches that are not episcopally ordered, provide exceptionally for there to be shared (not interchangeable) ordained ministry in some situations. This provision applies where there is theological convergence and in the context of the journey that the Churches concerned are making together towards full visible communion. The proposals in the JIC report build on this provision. The Anglican-Methodist Covenant is an example of an agreement that the Church of England has made with a Church that is not episcopally ordered, and these proposals are made under Canon B44 which is one of the Ecumenical Canons.

6. The JIC is putting forward this initiative under its mandate from the General Synod and the Methodist Conference 'to monitor and promote the implementation of the Covenant'. It now offers its proposals for consultation with appropriate bodies in both churches, as part of a process of discernment and reception.
7. The Interim Report will be debated by the Methodist Conference and the General Synod in July 2011. The respective resolutions to "receive" and to "take note of" the Report are effectively equivalent to each other. The Faith and Order Commission in the Church of England has not yet had an opportunity to consider the proposals in the Interim Report but it has already been decided that it will do so in the autumn, as will the full College of Bishops. In accordance with the practices of the Methodist Church, the Conference is asked to direct the Faith and Order Committee and the Methodist Council to consider the proposals and the other matters raised in the report. To that end a revised version of Resolution 60/3. is offered below to replace the one set out in Volume 3 of the Agenda. The views of all these bodies, together with those expressed in the debates in the Synod and the Conference, will inform the JIC's further reflection on the subject in preparing its quinquennial report.

Standing Orders concerning Ecumenical Partnerships

8. Some circuits and districts have already sought to create local expressions of the Covenant with the Church of England or establish other partnerships with partner Churches in their area. It is interesting to note that, as indicated in *Moving Forward in Covenant*, such a step is already being sought by the relevant authorities of the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church in the geographic area of Cumbria.
9. The Methodist Church is engaged in a growing number of different types of ecumenical partnership in the various parts of the Connexion with a variety of other Churches. Some rough categories for those partnerships can be defined as follows:
 - (a) Church to Church (i.e. denominational) partnerships;
 - (b) district-wide or other regional embodiments of (a);
 - (c) other district-wide or regional partnerships;
 - (d) circuit-wide or other partnerships involving a number of local Methodist churches;
 - (e) formal Local Ecumenical Partnerships [of which there are a number of sub-types, and which normally have detailed constitutions].
10. In each case it is important to establish who in the Methodist Church needs to know about the partnership; who needs to approve the form of the partnership; and who in the Methodist Church in Britain is committed to what in the partnership. This has not always proved easy. There are varying levels of authority or permission for the different types of partnership in the foundational documents of the Church, Standing Orders, and Resolutions of the Conference. Irrespective of whether regulation of them is a good thing or bad thing, there are varying levels of regulation. There are varying levels of connectedness [i.e. "connexion"] between the varying partnerships; and it is not always completely clear who in the Methodist Church in Britain is committed to what within them.
11. It is important that (without becoming over-regulatory or too bureaucratic) clarity is sought about these matters as steps are taken to implement the Ecumenical Vision Statement adopted by the Conference of 2009, with its encouragement to live in and develop ecumenical partnerships. It is also important to ensure that any such partnerships are not suffocated by additional bureaucracy, whilst at the same time ensuring that they are 'connexional' in the sense of being coherent across the whole of the Connexion. At the moment, Standing Orders only provide for local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs) and require that each of them has a full-blown constitution that is vetted and approved at both district and connexional levels of the Church [eg Standing Orders 334, 412 and

434]. The underlying model seems to be that of a single congregation LEP, which by its very nature requires a formal and detailed constitution.

12. The Methodist Council has therefore recommended that some minor amendments need to be made to Standing Orders to enable extended covenanted partnerships or other types of partnership over extended areas to be formed to facilitate the sharing of mission and ministry without the need for additional constitutions or extended vetting procedures. A resolution to this effect is set out below.

Standing Orders concerning the authorisation of ministers of other Churches

13. The Deed of Union and Standing Orders currently provide for those ordained in other Churches to be recognised and regarded as admitted into full connexion with the Conference, or authorised to serve the Methodist Church as a presbyter or deacon, or granted the status of associate presbyter or deacon.
14. Paragraphs 92-96 of the report *Moving Forward in Covenant* make suggestions of ways in which those provisions could be further clarified and developed so that where the Conference is in a close partnership with the equivalent authorities of another Church, and that partnership is then embodied in some local expression of it, such as a Covenanted Partnership in an Extended Area or a United Area of the Methodist and United reformed Churches, presbyters and deacons of the other Church should automatically be granted an appropriate status and authorisation without the need for the detailed vetting of individual applications by a number of different bodies.
15. It is also proposed that it be made possible for those granted the status of associate presbyter and deacon to be authorised to serve as Associate Superintendents or Chairs of District. As Associate Superintendents and Associate Chairs they would not have responsibility for or control over Methodist resources or governance bodies, which would remain autonomous. However they would be able to co-discern, co-decide and co-deploy the resources of their own Church and co-fulfil their own responsibilities together with the Methodist Superintendent and Chair.
16. The Methodist Council concluded that, if viable, such developments would be of benefit in many ecumenical situations. It has therefore recommended that the Conference commission the necessary explorations of the issues with a view to any resulting proposals being brought to a future Conference. A resolution to that effect is set out below.

***** RESOLUTIONS**

60A/1. The Conference receives the Supplementary Report.

60A/2. (replacing Resolution 60/3)

The Conference receives the Interim Report of the Joint Implementation Commission entitled "Moving Forward in Covenant", commends it for study and directs the Faith and Order Committee and the Methodist Council to consider the issues raised in it.

60A/3. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraphs 8-12 of the Supplementary Ecumenical Report and amends Standing Orders as follows:

334 Local Ecumenical Development.

- (1) The Methodist Council shall annually appoint representatives to the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission, or such successor ecumenical body as the council shall from time to time designate, to exercise the functions specified in this

Standing Order. They shall include a member of the Connexional Team, designated as the ecumenical officer of the Methodist Church.

- (2) The Methodist representatives to the Panel shall act on behalf of the Methodist Council in performing the following functions:
 - (i) keeping under review the development of local ecumenical relationships in Britain and advising the Connexional Team accordingly;
 - (ii) providing guidelines for use of the Synods in **establishing ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance and in** designating local ecumenical partnerships and other local schemes involving constitutions for shared churches, and monitoring their operation and, through the ecumenical officer, receiving and scrutinising all proposals for new schemes;
 - (iii) offering advice in new or difficult situations.
- (3) By virtue of section 1, sub-sections (4) and (10) of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, the consent of the ecumenical officer shall be required for the making or amendment of any sharing agreement under that Act or any legislation amending or replacing it. Where any such agreement requires consent to its termination to be given on behalf of the Church, the ecumenical officer is authorised to give such consent.
- (4) The ecumenical officer shall be responsible **for providing information to the Conference and other bodies about ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance and** for the making of recommendations to the Conference on applications for the designation of ecumenical areas under schemes involving partnership at circuit level, and on proposals to give or revoke a direction under Standing Orders 512 and 611, as to all of which the ecumenical officer shall first obtain the report of the district Policy Committee.
- (5) The ecumenical officer shall compile a list of all new schemes approved by the Synods under Standing Order 412(2) and of all sharing agreements authorised by him or her, and shall ensure that they are reported to the Conference.

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- (2) The Synod has authority to **establish ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance, to** designate local ecumenical partnerships within the District and to approve the constitution of any **of the latter** such partnerships, such designation being made where possible in conjunction with a Sponsoring Body on which the Methodist Church is represented.

434 Ecumenical Relationships.

- (3) The committee (*ie the District Policy Committee*) shall:
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 - (iv) be responsible for making recommendations to the ecumenical officer on applications for sharing agreements under the terms of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, or any legislation amending or replacing that Act;
 - (v) be responsible for recommending to the Synod the **establishment of ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance, the** designation of local ecumenical partnerships and the approval of local constitutions, but only after submitting each such constitution to the ecumenical officer and the Faith and Order Committee and taking into account their advice;
 - (vi) consider and report to the ecumenical officer on all applications for the designation of ecumenical areas;
 - (vii) consider and report to the Synod or the ecumenical officer, as appropriate, on all proposals for the issue or revocation of directions under Standing Orders 512 and 611.

60A/4. The Conference adopts the recommendations in paragraphs 13-16 of the Supplementary Ecumenical Report and directs the Methodist Council, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, to undertake further work to clarify, develop and open up new ways in which people exercising authorised ministry in a Church with which the Methodist Church has a close partnership, where that Church-to-Church partnership is embodied in local partnerships, can be automatically granted recognition and authorisation to serve in and on behalf of the Methodist Church.