

17. Ecumenical Report

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Subject and Aims	Update to the 'general' part of the Ecumenical Report received by the Conference in 2013 which outlined the scope of the Methodist Church's ecumenical relationships.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The first part of the Ecumenical Report received by the Conference in 2013 outlined the scope of the Methodist Church's ecumenical relationships; this report is offered as an update to it.
- 1.2. Elsewhere in the Conference Agenda there are other reports that are particularly significant from an ecumenical perspective, including:
 - the Methodist Council's report on Motion 110 of the Conference in 2013 regarding the ending of the Connexional Liaison Officer for Scotland post;
 - the proposed response of the Conference to the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales;
 - the report of the Joint Implementation Commission (JIC) under An Anglican-Methodist Covenant; and
 - a report on the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

2. The Conference of European Churches (CEC)

- 2.1. The 14th Assembly of CEC took place in Budapest, Hungary from 3 to 8 July 2013. It adopted a new constitution and agreed to move CEC's Secretariat from Geneva to Brussels. Ms Emma Johnson, one of the Methodist Church's representatives to the Assembly was appointed to the Governing Board.
- 2.2. The Church and Society Commission (CSC) and the Churches in Dialogue Commission (CiD), which were formerly independent, are now being integrated into CEC. A joint working part of CEC and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is preparing proposals for how CCME will either also become an integral part of CEC or form a service level agreement with it.

3. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)

- 3.1. CTBI has published its report on the Good Society project which can be downloaded from www.ctbi.org.uk/671 and www.agoodsociety.org. The Foreword to the report says that CTBI wants to promote a year of conversation about the values that have emerged, what are the marks of a good society, and seeks to involve other groups.
- 3.2. CTBI arranged a preparatory and a follow-up meeting for those attending the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches; at the latter, consideration was given to how the themes of the Assembly and the work of the WCC relate to the churches in Britain and Ireland.
- 3.3. This year, CTBI's Annual Conference gathered in Cardiff at the end of April on the theme 'Christianity: continuity, presence and conflict'. The main topic was the situation that our Christian sisters and brothers are facing in the Middle East. The keynote speaker was the

Archbishop Emeritus of Haifa, His Excellency Elias Chacour who is a long-standing, staunch advocate for non-violence and peace and reconciliation between Arabs and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims.

4. Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)

- 4.1. ACTS has appointed a new General Secretary, The Revd Matthew Ross, following the retirement of Br Stephen Smyth.
- 4.2. In addition to its normal pattern of activities, ACTS arranged a Referendum Conference entitled, 'Churches and Nations – Challenges and Potential of the Scottish Referendum for the Future of Scotland, Britain and Ireland'. In March, six months before the referendum, representatives from churches in Ireland, England, and Wales as well as Scotland gathered in Edinburgh; the Methodist Church was represented by the Chair of the Scotland District and the Connexional Ecumenical Officer. There was a clear view that, whatever the result of the referendum, the debate is making a significant difference and, because of the way some are conducting the debate, there is, and will be, an important role for the churches in healing relationships.

5. Churches Together in England (CTE)

- 5.1. Last September, CTE's Enabling Group agreed three strategic aims for the ecumenical instrument:
 - Enabling greater knowledge of and deeper relationships between all the member churches, helping them acknowledge and receive gifts from each other.
 - Enabling the churches to respond together creatively in mission and service in changing contexts.
 - Enabling reflection on ecumenism at every level, but especially locally, regionally and nationally in England.
- 5.2. The Enabling Group also agreed that the Group for Local Unity (GLU) should cease to exist. This was a co-ordinating group of CTE, the successor body to the Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England (CCLEPE) which had been formed by the British Council of Churches. SO 212(7) requires the Methodist Council to nominate to the Conference representatives for appointment to a number of ecumenical bodies, including the Group for Local Unity; a resolution to amend that Standing Order is, therefore, brought to the Conference.

6. The Free Churches' Group (FCG)

- 6.1. The Group continues to seek to raise the profile of the Free Churches in England and Wales by recovering a distinct identity for the FCG within the broader ecumenical landscape in England and Wales. In May, the Group's residential meeting took place in Birmingham on the theme, 'Recalling the Past, Anticipating the Future'.

7. The Ecumenical Stakeholders' Forum (ESF)

- 7.1. The Forum continues to keep an overview of the Methodist Church's ecumenical activity with the aim of ensuring coherence and consistency in the representation of a Methodist perspective. This year, it has focused on the recommendations of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales, the developments in CEC, and the JIC report.

7.2. In last year's ecumenical report, reference was made to how the vision of unity as '(unity in) reconciled diversity', with which the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) is often associated, relates to the vision of unity known as 'full visible unity' to which the Methodist Church is also committed. The ESF is grateful that the Faith and Order Committee has begun to discuss this matter.

8. The Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM)

8.1. The Panel continues to deal with its wide-ranging agenda and in the past year has focused on responding to the JIC report, the so-called 'new ecumenism', and fresh expressions. It has agreed guidelines for the use of synods in designating single congregation local ecumenical partnerships. In the light of the growing number of partnerships with churches in the Pioneer Network, the Connexional Ecumenical Officer attended the Pioneer Leaders' Conference.

9. The Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group

9.1. This Group is also working with its renewed terms of reference and, in March, had its first meeting with its refreshed membership. It is reviewing a long list of work, including updating previous publications, and establishing its priorities.

10. The British Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission

10.1 The Commission is now working with its renewed terms of reference and membership. At the meeting in November, it sought an overview of the dialogue and then considered how each tradition understands holiness. The focus of the meeting at Ampleforth in May was evangelisation.

10.2 The Commission is grateful to the Revd Ken Howcroft for his reflections on his role and work in Rome over the last three years and looks forward to welcoming the Revd Dr Tim Macquiban as a member of the Commission when he becomes Minister of Ponte Sant' Angelo Methodist Church and Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office, Rome.

11. The Methodist Ecumenical Office, Rome

11.1 At its meeting in April, the Methodist Council approved the recent developments in the Methodist Ecumenical Office, Rome and the proposal that the Revd Dr Tim Macquiban be known as the Director of that Office as well as minister at Ponte Sant' Angelo Methodist Church.

11.2 The Council also supported the Methodist Ecumenical Office, Rome entering into the local covenant that was established in 2013 between two ecumenically significant centres in Rome: the Anglican Centre in Rome (<http://anglicancentre.churchinsight.com>) and the Roman Catholic Oratory of Saint Francis Xavier known as 'Del Caravita' (www.caravita.org).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

17/1. The Conference received the Report.

17/2. The Conference commended the CTBI report, *Good Society*, to Local Churches, Circuits, and Districts for study, discussion, and appropriate action, wherever possible with ecumenical partners.

17/3. The Conference encouraged Methodists throughout Britain to pray for the people of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom in the time leading up to and following the referendum on Scottish independence to be held on 18 September 2014.

17/4. The Conference amended Standing Order 212(7) as follows:

The council shall nominate to the Conference representatives for appointment to the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Churches Together in England, Action of Churches Together in Scotland, **and** Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales) ~~and the Group for Local Unity.~~