

The Ecumenical Calling of the Methodist Church

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Receive the paper for wider use
Draft Resolution	N/A
Alternative Options	Amendment of statement

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To provide material to inspire and encourage ecumenical partnerships throughout the Connexion
Main Points	Summary of the background to the status quo. Ecumenical working: practical steps, supporting one another, celebrating our identity.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Ecumenical review report (MC/08/41) <i>A Fresh Expression of Ecumenical Working</i> , paper discussed at the February Council 2009.
Consultations	Conference workshop on Ecumenical relationships; a working group including a Faith and Order representative; Chairs of District; ecumenical partners; Faith and Order Committee.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	None
Faith and Order	General impact on the work of F&O where this relates to ecumenical working.
Financial	None
Personnel	Impact on the working direction of Ecumenical Officers and a general impact on all Team staff who work with ecumenical partners.
Legal	None
Wider Connexional	The statement may provide guidance and assistance for the developing ethos and practical working of local churches and local ecumenical officers.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The statement should provide clear direction for all work with ecumenical partners
Risk	Any short statement on this area runs the risk of using language or phrases which limit our capacity for future ecumenical expansion. Conversely, providing too open a statement has the potential to call into question the clarity of a specifically Methodist identity.

The Ecumenical Calling of the Methodist Church

1. Background to the Current Paper

- 1.1 A working group was established to review the ecumenical relationships of the Methodist Church, which presented its report to the Methodist Council in April 2008.
- 1.2 The Council discussed this report at some length, received it, and approved the recommendations contained within it. However, Council agreed that it should not go to the 2008 Conference but rather that it would be presented to the 2009 Conference with a Vision Statement for the whole Church.
- 1.3 A workshop was organised at the 2008 Conference to take this discussion forwards. Attended by about 100 people, it explored the priorities for ecumenical involvement in the coming years; what Methodists should be prepared to give up for the sake of the unity of the Church; and what Methodists should be prepared to do differently in order to realise the breadth of our common life.
- 1.4 A working group was set up to take this work forward and the paper *A Fresh Expression of Ecumenical Working* was taken as an interim position statement to the Council in February 2009.
- 1.5 The Council discussed this paper, made some comments on specific aspects of it and suggested that a significant reduction was brought back to the Council in April 2009, which focused on practical steps to take in light of our ecumenical vision, based on the list contained within *A Fresh Expression of Ecumenical Working*.
- 1.6 The following material comes out of this context and seeks to fulfil the Council's requests. It represents a significant adaptation and reduction of the position statement from February. The framework used for this is the *Our Calling* document. This document exists to set out and shape all the Methodist Church does internally and externally. It is therefore used as a sound and familiar basis on which to build a statement of ecumenical aims and intent for the Church. It is hoped that this short statement and basic framework for the practical repercussions of those aims will provide sufficiently memorable and inspirational material for the Church and its churches and communities to move forward in positive ecumenical partnerships.

2. Our Ecumenical Calling: *Making a difference together in the twenty-first century*

Living in Ecumenical Partnership: *Practical Steps*

In all that it does, the Methodist Church will seek out opportunities for:

- **Worshipping with other Christians**
 - We will seek out opportunities to pray and worship with people from other Churches regularly and invite them to pray and worship with us, looking to develop more opportunities for ecumenical expressions of worship and prayer
- **Learning and Caring with other Christians**
 - We will seek out opportunities to learn with other Christians about our common faith and heritage to support our growth as Christians, through mutual support and care

- **Serving with other Christians**
 - We will seek out opportunities to work in partnership with other denominations to be good neighbours to those in need and to challenge injustice, upholding the integrity of creation
- **Evangelism with other Christians**
 - We will seek out opportunities to join with other Christians in sharing the Good News of the Gospel and to make more followers of Jesus Christ through together bearing witness to the unity of the one, holy, apostolic Church.

Living in Ecumenical Partnership: *Supporting one Another*

We will support our ecumenical partners in our common mission:

- working and campaigning with other Christians to remove stumbling blocks which currently inhibit ecumenical partnerships
- participating in ministries that extend beyond the boundaries and possibilities of any single church
- support in all ways possible those in united and uniting churches, and ecumenical projects
- supporting our ecumenical partners in their needs and struggles, celebrating their hopes and joy

Living in Ecumenical Partnership: *Celebrating our Unique Identity*

Successful ecumenical working does not ignore the differences between Christians and between Christian denominations. Its success comes when we embody a Christian love and discipleship that instils the desire to live a common life that welcomes and embraces difference as enrichment and possibility.

Recognising this, we will nurture our own Methodist identity within the one, holy, apostolic Church. We will offer the distinctive charisms of Methodism as a gift to the whole Church and in turn cherish the distinctive charisms of other Christian denominations.