

FAITH & ORDER COMMITTEE

The Committee has been invited to contribute more to the life of the church over the last year. This has been welcomed by the committee which is eager to serve the church by resourcing its theological and liturgical life. There appears to be a greater readiness to request assistance. Some of the work has traversed familiar questions, such as our engagement in ecumenical issues, while other work, such as that involved with sacraments in Local Shared Ministry, has taken us into uncharted territory. During the year the committee has responded to invitations to be involved with President Brian's ecumenical initiative bringing together church leaders to consider the future shape of ecumenism in New Zealand. In addition to that the committee has contributed a theological paper to support the ministry of the diaconate, played a role on the connexional Local Shared Ministry work group, collaborated with Mission and Ecumenical on various projects, resourced youth ministry and participated in the on-going reflection on the term of the president. In this way the committee is providing theological and spiritual insight to support the life of the church in worship and mission. We welcome the responses of persons and synods to our reports and encourage further dialogue.

The committee brings four reports for consideration by the conference. The most important of these is the Proposed Covenant between the Anglican and Methodist Churches. This was passed at the Anglican General Synod in May of this year. The other reports are a new version of the Revised Pastoral Resolutions, a contribution to the conversation on District Superintendency and a discussion paper on Sacraments in Local Shared Ministry.

Lectionary

The committee continues to be grateful for the work of the Rev. Dr Tony Stroobant. He has prepared the lectionary for the 2008-2009 liturgical year. We have retained the optional Season of Creation. The committee would be pleased to receive comments about the lectionary.

The Nature and Mission of the Church

This major study by Faith and Order from the World Council of Churches has been referred for comment to Churches around the world. During this year Faith & Order has collaborated with Te Taha Maori, Tauwi Youth and Mission and Ecumenical in formulating a New Zealand Methodist response. It has been an enriching experience. The proposed response can be found in the report of Mission and Ecumenical.

Methodist Ecumenical Consultation

This brings together twice a year various parts of Te Hahi Weteriana which are involved in different aspects of our ecumenical relationships. Faith & Order reports on its work in relation to ecumenism and hears reports from other groups such as Mission and Ecumenical and Mission Resourcing.

Joint Liturgical Group

This small ecumenical group meets once a year after Conference to share liturgical developments in our churches. Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Churches are represented. There is a report on the work of the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC) to which from time to time we contribute.

Roman Catholic Methodist Dialogue

The fourth phase of this long-standing dialogue is in the planning stages. It will meet twice a year in Hamilton and Auckland. It examines the work of the international dialogue, and develops a project of study for a three-year period. It is hoped that the fruits of the dialogue will be made widely known throughout the church.

An Anglican – Methodist Covenant

We, The Methodist Church of New Zealand (Te Hahi Weteriana o Aotearoa) and The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (Te Hahi Mihinare ki Aotearoa ki Niu Tireni, Ki Nga Moutere o te Moana Nui a Kiwa), on the basis of our shared history, our agreement on the apostolic

faith, our shared theological understandings of the nature and mission of the church and of its ministry and oversight, and our agreed vision of a greater practical expression of the unity in Christ of our two churches, hereby make the following covenant.

Landmarks on the journey

At the outset we celebrate the many ways, both formal and informal, in which Anglicans and Methodists already share and work together, including common engagement in twenty-nine co-operative parish ventures. In particular we acknowledge:

1. Acceptance of each others church as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. (AGS 1976/MC 1980)
2. That the ministry of each of our churches is a real ministry of Word and Sacrament. (AGS 1976/MC 1980)
3. The apostolic content in the ordained ministry of each of our churches. (AGS 1986/MC2004)
4. That each church exercises a ministry of episkope. (AGS 1986/MC2004)
5. The commitment of our churches to seek a unification of ministries. (AGS 1980/MC 1980)
6. A mutual recognition of baptism and church membership. (AGS 1980/MC 1980)
7. That baptised members of each church are free to receive the Eucharist in each other's churches. (AGS 1980/MC 2004)¹

We recognise that in the past there have been disappointments as well as hopes in the relationship between our two churches. However we are resolved to work at closer relations within the search for the visible unity of the church.

Our Aotearoa New Zealand context

We acknowledge each other's response to the Treaty of Waitangi – the three-tikanga partnership of the Anglican Church (Pakeha/Maori/Polynesia), and the bicultural partnership of the Methodist Church (Maori/Tauiwi). Led by the Holy Spirit our two churches have each developed a model appropriate for themselves. Both churches have been significantly transformed and continue to evolve in response to Treaty of Waitangi and other contextual issues.

In this covenant we affirm:

1. That the unity of the church is not incidental to God's purpose. The unity of the church (which is the prayer of Jesus in John 17) demonstrates God's ability to reconcile through Christ and supports the mission of God. The unity of the church serves the unity of creation.
2. That visible unity of the churches involves mutual acceptance of the apostolic faith, sacramental life and ministry, and a common mission to the world.
3. Each other's understandings of the mission of the church, including: the ministry of all the baptised; proclamation of the gospel; the nurture of all members; care of those who are new to the church; social service; transformation of unjust structures; and the care of creation.
4. That each church in its own way exercises the ministry of episkope or oversight. The Anglican Church does this through the office of bishops and synodical government. The Methodist Church does so through the annual conference, the presidency between conferences, and by devolution of the conference district superintendents and connexional boards and committees.
5. That episkope is to be expressed at three levels: the personal whereby the ordained are called to service and responsibility within the church; the collegial which calls the ordained to consult with each other and act together in the exercise of the ministry of the oversight; the communal which recognises that all baptised members participate not only in the mission of the church, but also in the ministry of oversight.
6. That our two churches' different exercise of personal, collegial and communal oversight reflects ways in which our churches are variously nurtured in the faith, pastored, guided and disciplined.
7. The ministry of oversight in both our churches is concerned with the nurturing and maintenance of the community's fidelity to the teaching of the apostles, the preaching of the gospel, the authentic celebration of the sacraments, and the mission of the church.
8. That efforts at convergence in the practice of episkope challenge both our traditions. We note the call in the World Council of Churches Faith and Order statement 'Baptism, Eucharist and

¹ AGS – Anglican General Synod; MC – Methodist Conference.

Ministry' (1982) that all churches need to examine their practice of episkope. Churches in which episkope is exercised in a presbyteral or corporate fashion need to consider the merits of a personal episcopacy. Churches which are episcopally ordered are challenged to seek the renewal of their practice of episcopal ministry, taking into account the positive contributions which can be made by systems of presbyteral and corporate oversight. A frank acceptance by all parties of the need for renewal and mutual enrichment would do much to remove negative perceptions and to advance koinonia and the process of convergence.

9. Our vision at this time is one of visible unity. We are not sure at this time what this would look like, or what its implications might be for our two churches. ("What we will yet be has not yet been revealed." 1 John 3:2) We see this search as a journey in keeping with the model of "Unity by Stages" already affirmed by our two churches. We do not see one church absorbing another, or the extinguishing of any of the existing identities within our churches. The treasures all bring are to be preserved (e.g. spiritualities, cultural identities). We seek a visible unity for our two churches that receives and cherishes all the gifts, all the insights, and all the treasures, and holds them together in a creative way that serves God's mission in the world.

Covenant and ecumenical space

We need to develop ecumenical space as a setting in which, even in a state of division, we bear witness to our common allegiance to Jesus Christ and cooperate to advance the visible unity of the church. Ecumenical space offers us a way forward. In such a space we affirm our common Christian identity and have the possibility for a new discourse as we talk to one another in a new way. This provides a greater opportunity to discern together Christ's will for the church in ways that are not possible in isolation from each other. In this way ecumenical space brings the churches into living encounter with one another. We consider that the concept of ecumenical space has much to offer a covenant such as the one proposed. We commend the statement on ecumenical space in "Episkope and Episcopacy and the Quest for Visible Unity" (World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper No. 183 1999 pages 43-45. See appendix to this covenant)

In this covenant we commit ourselves:

1. To develop a safe ecumenical space in which there is opportunity to explore together uncomfortable questions.
2. To an ongoing dialogue that seeks to:
 - realise more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our traditions, taking steps to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service in the world.
 - further explore together the meaning and exercise of episkope in both our churches life and work.
 - Work towards a united and interchangeable ministry to more fully express the visible unity of our two churches.
3. To continue to provide opportunities welcome each other's baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches, and to encourage forms of eucharistic sharing, including eucharistic hospitality, in accordance with the rules of our respective churches.
4. To provide opportunities to listen to each other and to take account of each other's concerns, especially in areas that affect our relationship as churches.
5. To provide opportunities to celebrate together annually throughout the country in an intentional way, our common faith through a focus on the offerings to the church of John and Charles Wesley who owned both the Anglican tradition and the Methodist way, on either the date set in the Anglican calendar (the Sunday nearest 8 March), or that provided for in the Methodist calendar (the Sunday nearest 24 May).

In this covenant we seek these outcomes:

1. An ongoing and intentional dialogue that will deepen the present relationship of our two churches and move us towards visible unity.
2. A greater commitment to dealing with the issues that presently prevent closer communion between our two churches.
3. An open and generous relationship that holds an awareness of the other in everything we do.

4. A focus on a common mission to the world.

Appendix

"Ecumenical space" is the milieu in which, even in a state of division, we bear witness to our common allegiance to Jesus Christ and cooperate to advance the visible unity of the church. In this space we affirm our common Christian identity. For this reason, we have the possibility of a new discourse: we talk to one another in a new way. In turn, we have a greater opportunity to discern together Christ's will for the church in ways that are not possible in isolation one from another. Space thus understood brings the churches into living encounter with one another. It is helpful to enumerate the presuppositions, characteristics, opportunities and obligations of being together in "ecumenical space".

Presuppositions of ecumenical space: - recognition of common baptism in Christ:

- search for theological understanding on the basis of scripture, tradition and experience;
- commitment to search for unity, to seek to transcend former divisions; commitment to processes of dialogue, and thus to transformation and renewal in the light of the common quest;
- maintenance of fellowship in the situation of divergent affirmations, thus demonstrating commitment to the process.

Characteristics of ecumenical space:

- frank and serious discussion, including search and discovery, questioning and listening;
- mutual respect, so that no church is required to deny its identity or heritage;
- restraint from judgment, thus excluding a purely negative attitude on the part of one church towards another.

Opportunities afforded by ecumenical space: - reconciliation of memories; - conversion and renewal; - common witness:

- guidance into the will of the Spirit;
- discernment of what will advance the visible unity of the church.

Obligations of being together in ecumenical space:

- compatibility of attitude and behavior within and outside this ecumenical space; - avoidance of actions inconsistent with brotherly/sisterly relationships;
- mutual support, forbearance and accountability.

Within such space, discernment takes place through testing on the basis of scripture, tradition and experience and according to confessional criteria. Individuals function as representatives of their communities committed to dialogue. Deliberation continues even when disagreements seem incapable of resolution. Ecumenical space continues to be a place of interrogation and encouragement, a place where the process of the reconciliation of history must occur.

The process of discernment within the space will raise questions about the relation between the global, regional and national processes of dialogue. It is clear that internal decisions cannot be reached in isolation from partners, and decisions in one region or nation will have an impact on others. For this reason, in any significant decision or agreement concerning church life, compatibility and consistency with partner churches should be tested before finalisation. In sum, mutual accountability to partners must be a chief consideration in the stage-by-stage unfolding of a process that is under the Spirit and oriented to an ultimate future belonging to the Triune God.

The group believed the need for an awareness and practice of ecumenical space is urgent with regard to the topic of episkope. It saw two questions arising:

1. Is there the possibility of ecumenical space allowing for a corporate exercise of episkope and ecumenical accountability across the churches? Could there be some structural form of episkope within the ecumenical space?
2. Is it possible to have institutional examples of ecumenical space where both episcopal and non-

episcopal churches are able to question and listen to one another's experiences and reflections?

"Episkope and Episcopacy and the Quest for Visible Unity" (World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper No. 183, 1999, pages 43-45).

The proposed Covenant is the fruit of collaboration between the Faith & Order Committee and the Mission and Ecumenical Committee along with the Anglicans.

The New Revised Pastoral Resolutions

Introduction

Conference 2007 referred a Memorial from Auckland Synod asking the Committee "to review and revise the current wording and usage of the Revised Pastoral Resolutions..."

The Pastoral Resolutions currently appearing in the front of the Law Book, authorised by Conference 1969, are based upon the "Resolutions On Pastoral Work", commonly referred to as the "Liverpool Minutes 1820". These, in turn, are said to owe a debt to Wesley's "Rules of a Helper".

In Wesleyan Methodism, the Liverpool Minutes were to be "read and considered in every Annual Meeting of the District Committees, as our Standing Regulations require". In 1848 the Conference resolved that they should also be read "once a quarter at the Weekly Meeting of Ministers in each Circuit..."

The Pastoral Resolutions have undergone many revisions within the British Conference over the last 150 years, and have been much adapted by Conferences elsewhere. The Uniting Church "Service of Ministerial Rededication", for example, may have the Pastoral Resolutions in its pedigree but looks to have been heavily influenced by the Westminster Confession. One thing that may be inferred from all this is that, while the church has valued performing, in some way, some version of the Pastoral Resolutions over the years, no strict formula has been followed. It follows that we in our day can feel free to adapt what we have inherited for use in our changing times.

Over recent years, the anecdotal evidence is that reading The Pastoral Resolutions at Ministerial Synods is regarded as optional. In some places they have not been read, together, for years. In others they are read, but not regularly. All of which might relate to reservations on the part of many towards some of the wording and content of the 1969 version of the Pastoral Resolutions, which has finally found a focus in the Memorial to Conference last year seeking a revision.

In an increasingly pluralistic age it is, perhaps, problematic to come up with a set of words which all might, with integrity, say together. On the other hand, if reading The Pastoral Resolutions is understood as an affirmation of *community* (particularly of the ordained), rather than of belief, the practice might find renewed usefulness within Synods. The Committee continues to see value in the renewal of ordination vows and suggests it may be useful for Synods to have a discussion of what reading the Pastoral Resolutions together in some form "does" for individuals, the Synod as a whole, and even the wider church.

Following is a re-worded version of The Pastoral Resolutions which takes some account of the increased understanding of the significance of context within which ministry is exercised, the increasing imperative towards better inter-faith relations, and the constantly shifting language with which we try, however inadequately, to express the mystery of both call and ministry.

To conclude, in addition to the traditional choral recitation of The Pastoral Resolutions, there are several suggestions as to how they might be creatively handled in other ways within Synods.

Revised Pastoral Resolutions (2008)

Our ordination

We recall that at our ordination we received, by the authority of the church, the promise of God's Spirit, and were commissioned to proclaim the gospel, maintain the faith, build up the body of Christ and equip God's people for their work of mission. In humble obedience we now renew our ordination vows. We commit ourselves again to remain open to Christ's call, to the service of Christ, and to accept the discipline of the Church.

God's world

The world we live in is one of hope and fear, love and hatred, unity and division. Yet, for all its confusion, this world is God's world, Christ is Lord and Christ's love will prevail. Therefore we pledge ourselves to the task of breaking down religious and other barriers, and of offering to all people that fullness of life which is to be found in Jesus Christ.

The living Word

At the heart of the Gospel there stands Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. We therefore resolve in all our preaching, teaching and administering of the sacraments, to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit so that our words and actions may commend to all the risen Christ. To this end we commit ourselves to disciplined study, and accept the challenge to wrestle with contemporary thought so that we may proclaim a relevant word for our age and context.

Pastoral responsibilities and administration

Remembering Jesus' infinite love for people, we resolve to give our pastoral responsibilities a central place in our ministry. We will counsel people as need arises, and will endeavour to give adequate preparation for baptism, confirmation and marriage. We are determined to be careful in administration, sensitive in our conduct of meetings and constantly alert to the particular needs of each person.

Relationship with others

In a unique way we are brothers and sisters in Christ to all ordained ministers in the church catholic. We also share responsibility with all religious leaders to ensure that our spiritual traditions promote peace, justice and healing between the peoples of the world. We resolve to grow in our understanding of others and to develop healthy relationships within our neighborhood and nation.

Stewardship

We are determined to exercise a wise and disciplined stewardship of our time, abilities, possessions, friendships and health. We resolve to remember our responsibilities to home, family and whanau as well as to our pastorate.

Our devotional life

We remind ourselves that all our efforts are of little consequence unless they spring out of a lively relationship with Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to nurturing our spiritual life through worship, prayer and engagement with the world. We now offer ourselves afresh to God in love and for the work of the ministry.

Response

All that we have is yours, O Lord; we give you but your own. Grant us grace to be faithful. Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Use of the Pastoral Resolutions

In addition to the traditional the choral reading, the Committee suggests some new ways the Pastoral Resolutions might be included in Ministerial Synods:

1. Use seven readers; after each: pause, reflect and pray. Close with the Response (above).
2. Use seven readers; after each light a candle and recite a relevant response together. Close with the Response (above).

3. Break into small groups. Ask each group to reflect on the contemporary/contextual relevance of each resolution. Share in plenary session, close with prayer and the Response (above).
4. In advance of meeting ask seven people to prepare a short reflection on each resolution, which could lead into plenary discussion. Close with prayer and the Response (above).

Reflections on Superintendency

Conference 2007 asked Faith & Order to consider the ministry of district superintendents. This was in response to a memorial from the Hawkes Bay-Manawatu-Taranaki-Wanganui and Wellington Synods which read:

That, in view of the changed nature of synod superintendency in the 21st century, Section 4.8.1 of the Laws & Regulations is amended to read: *“Synod super-intendency shall be carried out by an appropriately experienced presbyter, deacon or lay person, and by such others as are appointed by the Conference.”*

Evidently the issue has been raised in view of a perceived shortage of presbyters in some districts and the possibility in some cases of there not being a sufficiently experienced presbyter to be appointed as district superintendent.

It is easy for a discussion on matters like this to become confused by issues such as the rights of lay people in the church. The committee does not believe that this issue is about power or control. Rather it has to do with the order of the church.

Essentially the matter raised has to do with the structure of our inherited Methodist polity. At the heart of the issue is the way in which the Conference exercises authority in the church.

Currently the Law Book states:

“Synod superintendency shall be carried out by a presbyter in full connexion and by such others as are appointed by the Conference to exercise general pastoral oversight of the district and to carry out administrative duties as required by Conference.” (Section 4 – 8.1)

It is the understanding of the committee that it is the ministry of a superintendent minister, whether of a parish or a district, to represent and interpret the mind of Conference in parish or district. The traditional way of securing accountability in this regard is for all superintendent ministers to be in full connexion. This being in full connexion sets up a particular relationship between the ordained and the Conference, such that Conference is able to ensure that there is an accountability of the superintendent minister to Conference.

The way this works in practice is that the superintendent minister of parish or district is accountable to their peers on the floor of Conference. This is important if a superintendent minister is failing to represent and interpret the mind of Conference in parish or district.

Lay people are responsible to their peers on the floor of synod or parish council. Superintendent ministers, in full connexion, are accountable for their ministry and for the way they represent the mind of Conference on the floor of Conference.

The polity works along these lines: whereas lay people represent their parishes in the Conference, superintendent ministers represent the Conference in parish and district. Conference is able to hold the superintendent minister accountable for the exercise of this ministry through all superintendent ministers being in full connexion.

To move away from this inherited polity would constitute a major change. It would touch on the heart of connexional polity. We do not believe a strong case has been made for such radical change. There are good reasons why this order has been retained. Much would be lost were it to be abandoned.

Sacraments within Local Shared Ministry

Conference has accepted Local Shared Ministry as a model of ministry that parishes may consider adopting. Provisions exist to enable a parish to embark upon a process of discernment to establish whether this form of ministry will suit the context and challenges being faced by the parish.

Local Shared Ministry is a model that recognizes that the gifts of the Holy Spirit to lead the local church in worship and witness are to be found within the local Christian community. Resources are made available by the wider church to support the development of a ministry team.

Should a parish decide to embrace Local Shared Ministry, the parish will identify those from within the congregation who have gifts to serve within a team where ministries are exercised. The question arises as to how sacramental ministry should be provided.

Within Methodism it is the ministry of the ordained presbyter to preside at the sacraments. After exploring the options, Faith & Order propose that this principle be retained for Local Shared Ministry in Methodist parishes or congregations and in Union and Co-operating Parishes.

The Committee encourages the Church to draw on its understanding of the Local Presbyter. This could be developed in such a way that a person, chosen by the local parish could be assessed for ordination to take responsibility for sacramental ministry within the Local Shared Ministry.

Such a person would have the confidence of the local parish and the wider Church. They would be mature in faith, receive preparation for this ministry and be ordained to the presbyterate. Because ordination does not confer status but the Church's endorsement to exercise ministry, they would take their place within the team.

Within the setting of Local Shared Ministry, the one ordained to the presbyterate would have a covenant in which the parameters of their ministry would be defined. The focus of their ministry would be sacramental, exercised alongside others engaged in preaching, pastoral, educational and missional forms of service.

Not only is this approach consistent with Methodist polity, it would have the advantage of being ecumenically acceptable, as Anglicans and Presbyterians, our partners in co-operative ventures, have chosen to take the same path. Recognising that there are still questions to be answered and details to be resolved, the Faith & Order Committee commends this approach to the Church.

Suggested Decisions:

1. That the report be received.
2. That Conference recognizes the contribution to the Faith & Order Committee of the Rev. Dr John Salmon over thirty years.
3. That Conference endorses the Covenant with the Anglican Church and encourages the Committee to take the next steps in the conversation.
4. That Conference welcomes the new Revised Pastoral Resolutions and commends them for use.
5. That Conference receives the paper on District Superintendency.
6. That Conference refers the working paper on Sacraments in Local Shared Ministry back to the committee for further consideration.
7. That the committee for 2009 be: Terry Wall (Convenor), Tovia Aumua, (representing Sinoti Samoa) Shirley-Joy Barrow (representing the deacons), Norman Brookes, Michael Dye, Tony Franklin, Robyn Allen Goudge, Valerie Nicholls, Siosifa Pole, Tony Stroobant, Sisa Tuicakau (representing Wasewase ko Viti kei Rotuma e Niu Siladi), a representative from Vahefonua Tonga O Aotearoa, a student representative from Trinity College and a representative of the Evangelical Network.