

# Paper W1

## Faith & Order Conversations

Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group





## Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group: Faith & Order Conversations

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p><b>1) Mission Council agrees that bilateral conversations should take place with the Methodist Church to undertake theological exploration of the beliefs and practices of the two denominations. These conversations should be commissioned on the following terms:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a. There should be three people from each of the two Churches, with the URC participants appointed by Mission Council in consultation with the Faith &amp; Order Committee;</b></li> <li><b>b. The group should meet over a period of two years, with any extension approved by the Methodist Council and the Mission Council as appropriate;</b></li> <li><b>c. Conversation should focus in the first instance on the particular questions of theologies of ministry, including appointment/call, and the ecclesiological foundations for connexionalism, congregationalism and Conciliarity;</b></li> <li><b>d. Other topics may be explored as time permits.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>2) Mission Council agrees that the group should report regularly to the two Faith &amp; Order Committees and the Methodist/URC Liaison Group.</b></p> <p><b>3) Mission Council agrees that it will be for the Strategic Oversight Group on the advice of the Methodist/URC Liaison Group to determine whether it is appropriate to take discussions to Methodist Council and/or Mission Council.</b></p>

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To commission faith and order conversations with the Methodist Church.
<b>Main points</b>	This proposal responds to requests for joint, accessible theological work.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Minutes of joint meeting of the Mission Council with the Methodist Council October 2012.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Faith & Order Committee

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Small cost of meetings for bilateral conversations
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	New clarity will have favourable impact on LEPs

# A proposal for Faith and Order conversations

## Methodist Church and United Reformed Church

### Background

In his address to the joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the United Reformed Church Mission Council in October 2012, the Revd Dr David Cornick, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, noted that although the two denominations have been close partners for many years, particularly through the life of their united congregations and united areas, and although they have held faith and order conversations with other Churches, they have never held bilateral talks with one another.

The joint meeting also noted two issues that plague the lives of the LEPs. The first is differing views of ministry, with Methodist ministers appointed by Conference to fixed terms of service and URC ministers called by their pastorates for open-ended terms. There is often awkwardness in the change of ministry from one denomination to the other. The second is the connexional view of Church in Methodism as contrasted with the centrality of the local church in the URC. Methodists expect a certain commonality of practice across the Church while their URC partners expect flexibility. When there is a project afoot, permissions happen in different ways. There was a clear message from the October 2012 joint meeting that deeper understanding in these particular areas should be sought as part of a larger goal of removing the barriers that impede local ecumenical collaboration.

There is no intention in this proposal that these conversations should be a precursor to the uniting of the two denominations. The purpose is mutual understanding and theological engagement with the hope of relieving some of the tension points in local ecumenism.

### Resolutions

- 1) **Mission Council agrees that bilateral conversations should take place with the Methodist Church to undertake theological exploration of the beliefs and practices of the two denominations. These conversations should be commissioned on the following terms:**
  - a. **There should be three people from each of the two Churches, with the URC participants appointed by Mission Council in consultation with the Faith & Order Committee;**
  - b. **The group should meet over a period of two years, with any extension approved by the Methodist Council and the Mission Council as appropriate;**
  - c. **Conversation should focus in the first instance on the particular questions of theologies of ministry, including appointment/call, and the ecclesiological foundations for connexionalism, congregationalism and Conciliarity;**
  - d. **Other topics may be explored as time permits.**
- 2) **Mission Council agrees that the group should report regularly to the two Faith & Order Committees and the Methodist/URC Liaison Group.**
- 3) **Mission Council agrees that it will be for the Strategic Oversight Group on the advice of the Methodist/URC Liaison Group to determine whether it is appropriate to take discussions to Methodist Council and/or Mission Council.**

