

FULL COMMUNION WITH OTHER CHURCHES (1968)

1. The idea of communion with other Churches is well established in our usage. S.O. 55 refers to the power of Conference to transfer ministers to other Conferences and to 'other Churches with which we are in communion'. At the outset of negotiations between the Anglicans and ourselves the Conference required as a preliminary condition that 'the Methodist Church would be free to preserve the relations of intercommunion and fellowship with other non-episcopal Churches which it now enjoys.'

We assume that we are in complete communion with all those Churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, and who are willing to be in communion with us, and it is our custom to welcome to the Lord's Table communicant members of other Churches. But we have so far never closely defined the meaning of 'full communion', nor is there any list of Churches with which we have formally established relations of full communion. We have the fullest possible reciprocal relations with all other Methodist Churches; and our membership of the Free Church Federal Council implies relations of intercommunion with other members of that Council.

2. In the present state of relations between the Churches, the subject of intercommunion naturally attracts great attention, especially when relations between episcopal and non-episcopal Churches are envisaged. There is discussion about the connotation of the various terms, such as intercommunion, open communion, full communion etc., and various denominational and ecumenical consultations have taken place. It is understood that the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Intercommunion is shortly to be published.

3. The Faith and Order Committee recommends the Conference to authorize it to prepare and present in due course a full statement of the meaning we attach to the nature and extent of communion between Churches, in the total context of Church relations and in the light of the pronouncements of other Churches; and meanwhile to reaffirm our intention to maintain all the present relations of intercommunion which we enjoy.

4. In view of the above statement, the definition of relationship with any particular Church must be delayed until we have clarified the meaning which we attach to the concept of communion between Churches.

(Agenda 1968, pp. 61f)

An amended version of what was Standing Order 55 in 1968 is to be found in Standing Order 725 in 2000.