

## Armed Forces Covenant

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision
<b>Resolutions</b>	68/1. The Council receives the report.  68/2. The Council agrees to sign the Corporate Covenant.
<b>Alternative Options to Consider, if Any</b>	The Council does not support the ratification of the Corporate Covenant and declines to provide signatories.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To inform the Council of the request to participate in a Corporate Covenant for the Armed Forces. To commend the Corporate Covenant to the Council for signature
<b>Main Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Armed Forces Covenant was established through the Armed Forces Act 2011 to describe the relationship between the Nation, the State and the Armed Forces.</li> <li>• The Heads of Chaplaincy for the three Services have invited the Sending Churches to consider participating in the Corporate Covenant.</li> <li>• The Board commends the signing of the Corporate Covenant to the Methodist Council</li> </ul>

### Summary of Impact

<b>External (eg ecumenical)</b>	Covenant developed in consultation with other Sending Churches
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## Armed Forces Covenant

### Historical Church Background

- 1 The Methodist Church has had a formal relationship with the Armed Forces since the formation of the Wesleyan Royal Navy and Army Board in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This became fixed in our structures when we became a 'Sending Church' offering commissioned Chaplains to the Army (1914) and RAF (1918) and Navy (1941).
- 2 The original engagement with the Forces was clearly to respond to the specific spiritual and pastoral needs of Methodist service personnel. This gradually morphed into a ministry which was understood to be part of the Methodist Church's mission to the whole of the Armed Services and their families.
- 3 At present we have 30 full-time Commissioned Presbyters serving across the three services and a growing number of part-time Reserve Chaplains. Among this cohort are a number of Methodist Chaplains who serve at a very high level. The Revd Timothy L Wilkinson is a Royal Navy Principal Chaplain; the Revd Paul Mellor is RAF Principal Chaplain while the Revd Michael D Parker is the most senior Methodist Chaplain alongside three of his colleagues who contribute to the leadership of the Royal Army Chaplains Department.

### The Armed Forces Covenant

- 4 The Armed Forces Covenant was established through the Armed Forces Act 2011 and was intended to describe the relationship between the Nation, the State and the Armed Forces.
- 5 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, shall be treated fairly. The Covenant invites businesses, local authorities, charities and community organisations to participate in support of the forces through services, policy and projects.
- 6 In practice the Covenant is made effective at local level through Community Covenants which bring military and civilian communities together. These local covenants were initially supported through a £30m grants scheme but since 2012 the Government has an annual £10m fund allocated in perpetuity and based on a fund arising from London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) fines.
- 7 On a larger scale the Corporate Covenant is a way in which larger organisations, businesses, charities and churches can make a voluntary public pledge which demonstrates their support for the Armed Forces Community and sits alongside the Community Covenant Scheme and aims to meet two key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant:
  - No member of the Armed Forces Community should face any disadvantage in their encounter with the participating organisation, compared with any other citizen.
  - In some circumstances, special treatment may be appropriate, especially for the injured or the bereaved.

### The Churches and the Armed Forces Covenant

- 8 The Heads of Chaplaincy for the three Services have invited the Sending Churches (Church of England, Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, The Salvation Army and a cluster of Churches under the United Board including the Baptist Union and the URC) to consider participating in the Corporate Covenant. Specifically, the Chaplain in Chief (RAF)

approached the Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board (MFB) to see if the Board and the Methodist Church would consider signing a Corporate Covenant.

- 9 The Church of England signed a Covenant in February 2015 and the Church of Scotland is expected to agree to do this at its General Assembly in May 2017.

### **The recommendation of the Methodist Forces Board (MFB)**

- 10 The Forces Board commends the signing of the attached Corporate Covenant to the Methodist Council for the following reasons:
- To offer welcome, fair treatment and a principle of inclusion to Military Personnel and their families is a Gospel imperative. The Covenant clearly identifies the Methodist people as a Church of hospitality for those who serve their country in a way that sometimes includes putting their own lives at risk.
  - The Covenant will ensure that the whole church is alert to the needs of veterans young and old.
  - The Covenant reflects existing good practice in ensuring that our buildings are accessible to all including Armed Forces personnel and veterans with disabilities.
  - The Covenant will seek to affirm and value members of the Methodist Church who serve as part of the Regular or Reserve Forces.
  - The Covenant will continue to affirm and value the contribution of chaplains, Methodist and others in their ministry to the Armed Forces.
  - The Covenant recognises widespread appropriate observance of Remembrance Sunday and the prayerful recollection of service and sacrifice.
  - The Covenant will support Methodist Council employees who choose to be members of the Reserve Forces
  - The Covenant will be a new articulation of an already existing relationship.
  - This Covenant will allow sections of the Church including the MFB and local Circuits and Districts to apply for Covenant Funding for appropriate projects.
- 11 The Forces Board suggests that the commitments contained within this Covenant should be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain relevant to both the Church and the Armed Forces Community in the years ahead.
- 12 The Forces Board suggests that the Chair and Secretary of the Forces Board work with the Chairs' Meeting to find ways in which the intention and detail of the Covenant can be disseminated throughout the districts and circuits.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**68/1. The Council receives the report.**

**68/2. The Council agrees to sign the Corporate Covenant.**