

28. Marriage Guidance

Contact name and Details	The Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee Price-TebbuttN@methodistchurch.org.uk
Resolutions	28/1. The Conference receives the Report. 28/2. The Conference directs that Part B of this Report be printed in Book VII (Guidance) of <i>The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church</i> and that it replace Parts 8 (<i>Christian Preparation for Marriage</i>), 9 (<i>Guidelines for Inter-Faith Marriages</i>) and 10 (<i>Marriage and Relationships: Good Relating, Cohabitation and Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage</i>).

Summary of Content

Subject and aims	This report consolidates the guidance on marriage and relationships so that it can be found in one place.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part A: Report on the work • Part B: Revised guidance for the Methodist Church relating to marriage and relationships
Background Documents	<i>Marriage and Relationships: Provisional Resolutions, 2021</i> <i>The response of the Faith and Order Committee to the God in Love Unites Us report, 2021</i> Parts 8, 9 and 10 of Book VII of CPD.
Consultations	The Law and Polity Committee.

Part A Report on the work

1. The 2021 Conference directed the Faith and Order Committee in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee to bring revised Guidance for Marriage to the 2022 Conference taking into account the matters identified in Part E of *The response of the Faith and Order Committee to the God in Love Unites Us report 2021*. Part B of this report contains the proposed revised guidance which brings together parts 8-10 in Book VII of CPD.
2. In revising the guidance the following principles were applied:
 - a) Because the material in CPD has been agreed by the Conference then, primarily, it has been reconfigured rather than changed. Changes have therefore been made when the text needed updating or change was required for the sake of consistency and clarity. Deleted text is marked with a strikethrough and additions are shown in bold italics (as is standard practice). Should any member of the Conference like a copy of the detailed document which shows how the existing texts have been merged and re-ordered to form the new guidance below then please contact the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee;

- b) It was felt important to include the understanding of marriage agreed by the 2021 Conference and set out in SO 011A. This has been inserted in paragraph 10 of the revised guidance.
- c) Standing Order 011B also provides guidance around marriage. At the 2021 Conference it was the view of the Faith and Order Committee that this more appropriately belonged in the Guidance section of CPD, and it noted that “it would be helpful to have a comprehensive set of guidance in one place, rather than it being split between the Guidance section and Standing Orders.”¹ The relevant parts of SO 011B (paragraphs 3-8) have therefore been incorporated into the new guidance. It is not suggested that the Standing Order itself is amended at this stage, however.
- d) In the report *Marriage and Relationships* found elsewhere in the Agenda, the Faith and Order Committee comments on and brings a Resolution regarding the 1993 Resolutions. The Conference will therefore separately make a decision about whether the 1993 Resolutions continue to be printed in CPD, but the content of Resolutions 1 and 2 have also been included in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the revised guidance.
- e) Some existing material has been omitted, either because it is dated or because, within the reconfiguration, it is repetitive or in tension with later decisions of the Conference.
- f) The revised guidance uses the language of ‘authorised officiant’ in recognition that they may be a minister, probationer or a lay person nominated by the Church Council, and also that the precise title is different in different jurisdictions.
- g) Gender neutral pronouns have been used.
- h) In the existing guidance, the references to marriage preparation seem to imply that there would be a marriage preparation course. This is not the case in all contexts and the text has been amended to allow for preparation through pastoral conversation.

Part B Revised Guidance for the Methodist Church relating to Marriage and Relationships

A Marriage and Relationships in the Methodist Church

1. All significant relationships should be built on the example of Christ, in whom we see the supreme example of self-giving love, commitment, fidelity, loyalty, honesty, mutual respect, equality and the desire for the mutual flourishing of the people involved.
2. It is through that self-giving, rather than through self-seeking, that the self flourishes and begins to experience life in all its fullness (John 10:10) (though it needs to be recognised that the universal Church’s historic emphasis on self-sacrifice has often been misunderstood and misused [eg by abusive partners] in a way that is destructive of the wellbeing of the ones abused [often women]).
3. The Conference, affirming the joy of human sexuality as God’s gift and the place of every human being within the grace of God, recognises the responsibility that flows from this for us all. It therefore welcomes the serious, prayerful and sometimes costly consideration given to this issue by the Methodist Church.

¹ *The response of the Faith and Order Committee to the God in Love Unites Us report, 2021, 7.2*

4. All practices of sexuality **relationships** which are promiscuous, exploitative or demeaning in any way are unacceptable forms of behaviour and contradict God's purpose for us all.

Summary understanding of cohabitation

5. The Church recognises that the love of God is present within the love of two human beings who are drawn to each other, and who enter freely into some form of life enhancing committed relationship with each other, whether that be through informal cohabitation or a more formal commitment entered into publicly.
6. As a Church we wish to celebrate that the love of God is present in these circumstances, even if that grace is not responded to or even discerned by the people concerned.
7. The Church has an important calling, therefore, to point to the presence of God's love within such relationships, and to encourage people to respond to it in the renewing and deepening (by whatever means) of their commitment.

B A Methodist Church Policy for Marriages

8. The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship. It looks for an openness to God in them, not necessarily a developed understanding of the Christian faith.
9. Legally, marriage is a contractual relationship entered into by two people who make solemn vows and commitments to each other. In the understanding of the Methodist Church, marriage encompasses that but is also deeper and richer. The Methodist Church understands that marriage is a covenant relationship between two people, within God's covenant of love with them. Through it, they may experience, explore and express God's gracious love. ***As the marriage services remind us, marriage is a way of life which God has created and, in Christ, has blessed.***²
10. The Methodist Church understands that marriage is an exclusive relationship, freely entered into with a life-long intention of uniting two people in body, heart, mind and soul in ways that are appropriate to each partner. In it, God's Spirit enables both partners to know the security of love and care, bringing to each other comfort and companionship, enrichment and encouragement, tenderness and trust. Through such marriage children may be nurtured, family life strengthened, and human society enriched. ***Within the Methodist Church this marriage is understood in two ways: that marriage can only be between a man and a woman; that marriage can be between any two people. The Methodist Church affirms both understandings and makes provision in its Standing Orders for them.***³

Registration of buildings

11. Where there is a desire to use places of worship for marriage services or for services of blessing for a marriage previously solemnised, the managing trustees of those premises should actively consider whether they wish to do so solely for marriages of mixed-sex couples, or for marriages of same-sex couples as well as mixed-sex couples. The managing trustees should re-consider the question of the use of the place of worship for

² The Marriage Service, *Methodist Worship Book*, 1999, p.369

³ Standing Order 011A(1)

such services every five years or sooner.

12. A marriage service may only be conducted in a Methodist place of worship or elsewhere when it can be shown that the requirements of the legislation in the appropriate jurisdiction regarding the registration of buildings and personnel have been met and that the couple have complied with the requirements of such legislation which are their responsibility. Where a service of blessing of a marriage previously solemnised is requested, the person conducting the service must **be satisfied** ~~by himself or herself~~ that the couple are legally married.
13. Where the managing trustees wish to use a place of worship for marriage services, and the legislation of the relevant jurisdiction requires church buildings or personnel to be registered or authorised for the solemnisation of marriages, the managing trustees should take the relevant steps to comply. ***When nominating an authorised officiant to be registered the managing trustees should ensure those nominated are, or are willing to be, appropriately trained for the role. This training should include the leading of public worship, pastoral care and safeguarding.***
14. ***Whether or not the law of the relevant jurisdiction requires that Methodist premises must be registered for same-sex marriages before such marriages can take place, no same-sex marriage may take place on Methodist premises unless the managing trustees or, if none, the trustees, have approved the use of the premises for that purpose and taken any steps which may be necessary under the applicable law.***⁴
15. ***The managing trustees or, if none, the trustees of any Methodist premises which are registered for the solemnisation of the marriage of same-sex couples shall ensure that the District Chair is notified of such registration.***⁵

Responding to enquiries for marriage

16. It will be appropriate to find ways, often in co-operation with other Local Churches, to encourage contact from couples at a very early stage, ~~through leaflets in libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux and notice boards.~~ The process of marriage preparation and the subsequent confirmation of the request for a Christian marriage service ~~will~~ **may** otherwise be improperly constrained by arrangements for the provision of other aspects of the celebration. Since for most couples many matters require early planning, this will raise the question of the marriage service to a similar level of priority.
17. At the moment of initial enquiry, ~~to ensure that each couple is~~ **should be** directed to a ~~minister~~ **an authorised officiant** who is not prevented by conscience from considering their request. ~~A minister who is prevented by conscience from ever officiating at the marriage service of a couple in particular circumstances (e.g when one or both partners are divorced or the couple are cohabiting) should ensure that such couples are referred to a colleague not so prevented. Such a minister~~ **A presbyter** has no power to refuse the use of a place of worship for a marriage service in such circumstances by virtue of being in pastoral charge of a congregation which worships there.
 - 17.1. ***When:***
 - (i) ***a minister or probationer is stationed in a new appointment; or***
 - (ii) ***it is proposed that a member should become authorised to conduct marriages and he or she for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the***

⁴ Standing Order 011B(4)

⁵ Standing Order 011B(8)

*marriages of couples in particular circumstances, the person concerned shall participate in a pastoral conversation on the matter with the District Chair and the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit (if he or she is not the Superintendent). Every effort shall be made to ensure that no individual is placed under any pressure to act against the dictates of conscience.*⁶

17.2. ~~A minister, probationer or member~~ *An authorised officiant who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a mixed-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.*⁷

17.3. ~~A minister, probationer or member~~ *An authorised officiant who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a same-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall notify the District Chair, who shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.*⁸

17.4. *A couple who seek to be married in Methodist premises which are not appropriately registered for the purpose shall be referred, if registration is required, to the persons responsible for the conduct of marriages at premises which are so registered, preferably in the same circuit. If the person receiving the request is not willing for reasons of conscience to make such a reference, he or she shall so inform the District Chair, who shall make the reference in that person's place.*⁹

17.5. If within a Circuit it becomes clear that all the ~~ministers~~ **authorised officiants** are prevented by conscience from ever officiating at the marriage service of a couple in particular circumstances, **and/or there are no premises which are appropriately registered**, it will be necessary to seek assistance outside the Circuit. Even where geographical factors make this difficult, there can be no exception to the basic policy stated at 2 17 above.

18. At the initial interview, **the authorised officiant will seek** to establish a good relationship with the couple; to explore the appropriateness of their marriage taking place in an act of worship in a Methodist church; and to ascertain whether there have been any previous approaches to other churches and, if so, to explore the outcome (e.g whether another ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** has had difficulties or uncertainties in fulfilling their request, see ~~5.3~~ **20.3** below).

19. At the initial interview some couples will present a firm date for their proposed marriage service; in such a situation a ~~minister~~ **the authorised officiant** may indicate whether or not a marriage service in a particular church is possible on the chosen date, but should make it clear that this is a provisional arrangement which will need to be confirmed ~~in due course~~ **following marriage preparation**. It is recognised that this may lead to questions and problems concerning other arrangements. Nevertheless, there is an important principle involved: namely, that the Christian marriage service is not something to be assumed and undertaken without careful thought.

⁶ Standing Order 011B(3)

⁷ Standing Order 011B(5)

⁸ Standing Order 011B (6)

⁹ Standing Order 011B (7)

Preparation for marriage

20. Because Christian marriage and family life are held in high regard, to engage each couple seeking marriage in a process of preparation:

20.1. ~~Where~~ **MM** Marriage preparation courses are available ~~which~~ **they** should be used flexibly and, as far as practicable, geared to the specific needs of each couple.

20.2. Marriage preparation should include:

an encouragement to couples to explore their own expectations of marriage;

an opportunity for the couple to explore the principles and ideals which the Methodist Church attaches to marriage and family life;

an opportunity for the couple to examine the wider network of relationships which the couple bring to their partnership, with special reference to the duty of care owed to any dependent children, and, where applicable, the complex dynamics involved in establishing step families;

an assurance of the ~~the~~ **continuing** pastoral support of the church for marriage and family life, as for singleness, and an indication of the particular ways in which this support is expressed in the programmes of Local Churches;

~~an encouragement to each couple to confirm their initial request to be married in a Methodist church, so that each couple is able to affirm that they can participate with understanding and faith in the marriage service which is authorised by the Methodist Conference.~~

20.3. **In consultation with the church council and presbyter in pastoral charge, there should be a collaborative approach to MM** marriage preparation, should use not only the local Methodist minister's ~~presbyter's~~ experience and skill but also **drawing on** the experience and skills of members of the diaconate if not otherwise involved **ministers, local lay-pastors**, lay workers, other lay people, and colleagues in other churches and partner organisations.

The decision to conduct a marriage

21. To reach with each couple a clear decision relating to their request for marriage in a Methodist church.

21.1 At the conclusion of a **conversation or** marriage preparation course, the minister **authorised officiant** must meet each couple and hear from them **should ascertain from each couple** whether they still wish to be married in a Methodist church. If the couple re-affirm their request for marriage, the minister **authorised officiant** shall normally honour this request. If the couple decide not to seek to be married in a Methodist church, the minister **authorised officiant** shall explore with the couple appropriate ways in which the Methodist Church can continue to exercise its pastoral ministry towards them.

21.2 ~~A minister~~ **An authorised officiant, in consultation with the presbyter in pastoral charge**, alert to the sensitivities in a Local Church or community, may make a provisional pastoral judgment that a particular marriage in a particular Methodist church may have a destructive impact on the unity of the congregation or the good name of the Methodist Church in the community. (It is impossible to offer comprehensive illustrations

at this point, but for example, it may be that relatives from a previous marriage are members of the congregation and have not come to terms with the breakdown of that marriage.) In such a situation, after obtaining the couple's permission, the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant and presbyter in pastoral charge** must consult with the Chair of the District and the Superintendent Minister before any consent is given to celebrate the marriage in church. If the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** feels compelled to refuse the request for the sorts of pastoral reasons identified above, ~~they~~ ~~minister~~ must advise the couple about what may or may not be possible in another Methodist church in a different location. Sometimes the advice will be that they may wish to pursue their request in another Circuit; on rare occasions, the advice may be that they should not pursue their request in any Methodist church.

21.3 It may be that a ~~minister~~ **an authorised officiant**, having ~~heard from~~ **discussed with** a couple at the end of their period of preparation a request for marriage in church, has difficulties or uncertainties in fulfilling their request. (Such difficulties could arise, for example, because a ~~minister~~ **an authorised officiant** believes that potentially serious weaknesses in the couple's relationship have been exposed but not acknowledged or addressed.) Before indicating to the couple unwillingness to conduct the marriage service, the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** may find it helpful to check out these concerns with a colleague. If difficulties or uncertainties remain, the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** should explain them to the couple. If, following further discussion with the couple, the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** is still unable to conduct the marriage service, ~~she or he~~ **they** should offer to refer the couple to a colleague, on the understanding that the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** may first explain to ~~his or her~~ **their** colleague the nature of the difficulties or uncertainties involved. The colleague should then make a decision about conducting a marriage service in the light of ~~his or her~~ **their** conversation with the couple and with the first ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant**.

Liturgical considerations

22. ~~To~~ **Those who lead marriage services should** provide in each marriage service a liturgical celebration which symbolises the joy, solemnity and deep significance of the occasion. ~~Those~~ **They who lead marriage services** should be sensitive to the needs of any children from former relationships, and to the needs of other family members. Where appropriate, children may be incorporated into the liturgical celebration.

C Guidelines for Good Practice in applying the Church's policy

23. Ministers **and authorised officiants** should ~~regularly~~ review the whole process of responding to marriage enquiries, of marriage preparation, marriage services and support for marriage and family life. This review ~~should~~ **may** take place within **church councils**, circuit staff meetings and from time to time in Presbyteral Synods. **Ministers Presbyters** in single station Circuits are encouraged to work collaboratively with colleagues in neighbouring Circuits. In either case, where appropriate, the review ~~should~~ **may** take place with ecumenical colleagues.
24. The Methodist Church insists that no discrimination shall be permitted against any ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** on the basis of **sexuality**, gender or race in the performance of duties relating to marriage. Nor shall any ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant**, in any circumstances, collude with the suggestion of such discrimination. (For example, a male superintendent or minister must refuse to step in and replace a female colleague if a couple cannot accept the ministry of a woman.)
25. The training of ministers for the full range of their responsibilities in responding to requests for marriage services in Methodist churches (which includes working collaboratively with others, including lay people) should be an integral part of their initial

training in the theological colleges and on courses. Each District should also make arrangements for probationers to reflect on their developing experience in this area of ministry, and should offer support and supervision as the District judges appropriate.

26. ~~Ministers~~ **Authorised officiants** should consult ~~regularly~~ with **the presbyter in pastoral charge**, church stewards or the leadership team in a Local Church or Circuit about the participation of ~~church members, with the minister,~~ **the Methodist people** in marriage preparation, marriage services and the support of marriage and family life. Ministers should provide opportunities for local congregations to explore the Church's teaching on marriage, ~~divorce, singleness and family life~~ **and relationships**.
27. Churches and Circuits ~~should~~ **may wish** to take initiatives to establish among themselves, with other denominations and with partner organisations, a system of marriage preparation which is open to as many as possible; should encourage Methodist people to play an active part in resourcing marriage preparation courses; and should keep existing systems under review to ensure a high quality of service.
28. When a divorced person who is seeking to be married is troubled by a sense of guilt and failure because they have breached their original marriage vows, ~~a minister may suggest their~~ **it may be appropriate for them to** sharing in an act of prayer which expresses penitence, forgiveness and new beginnings.
29. When one party to a proposed marriage in a Methodist church is a member of another Christian denomination, and wishes a representative leader of that denomination to participate in the marriage service, ~~a Methodist minister~~ **the authorised officiant** shall do everything possible to accede to such a request. Care must be taken to adhere to the guidelines currently agreed between the Methodist Church and any other particular denomination.
30. For the purposes of **the law (in England and Wales)**, the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** may not proceed with a marriage ceremony until ~~he or she is~~ **they are** in possession of a ~~valid certificate or certificates (with or without licence) relating to the marriage~~ **the schedule supplied by the Registrar**.
31. The ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** shall see to it that every marriage is recorded in the register supplied by the Registrar-General and in the manner stipulated in the Registrar-General's instructions **the schedule is properly completed and returned to the Registrar following the ceremony**. ~~A lay person may be nominated by the Church Council to be the Authorised Person, or an Additional Authorised Person.~~
32. It is inappropriate for ~~a Methodist minister~~ **an authorised officiant** who, for whatever good reasons, and after appropriate consultations, declines to marry a couple in church, to recommend a civil marriage in a Register Office followed immediately by a Service of Blessing in a church. (The theological substance of the Service of Blessing coincides with the theological content of the Marriage Service. If there are well-founded reasons for the judgment that a particular marriage in church would contradict or tarnish the Methodist Church's teaching on marriage, these reasons will remain in force and lead to the conclusion that the Service of Blessing immediately after a civil marriage is not appropriate.)
33. When ~~a minister~~ **an authorised officiant** receives a request for an inter-faith marriage, ~~he or she~~ **they** shall discuss fully with the parties the religious, domestic and social implications of a marriage between a Christian and a member of another religion. The normal practice shall be to supplement a ceremony in the Register Office by prayers in the home. (Such prayers shall not take the form of the service of blessing.) Nonetheless,

it is recognised that, after appropriate consultation and reflection, both parties may desire the marriage service. In such a case, the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** shall follow the guidelines as laid down from time to time by the Conference¹⁰.

D Guidelines for Inter-Faith Marriages

34. All faiths cherish marriage and most would agree that seeking God's blessing on a marriage is vital. In Britain's pluralist society, there are more and more opportunities for marriage between people of different faiths. There are some who would see this as a cause for celebration, for it can betoken the meeting of faiths at a very deep social level, that of the life of the family.
35. Several options are open for a couple from different faith backgrounds when they are planning the marriage ceremony. Some will decide to supplement a **civil** ceremony in the Register Office with informal prayers in the home. This gives maximum flexibility to the couple to invite religious leaders, friends and family members from both faith communities to offer prayers for the blessing and protection of the marriage. Others opt for two formal ceremonies, to reflect the two faiths within the marriage, **but it must be clear that only one is legally effective**. It is also possible that the couple will decide to have one ceremony only and will choose either the Christian marriage service or a ceremony in accordance with the practices of the other faith.
36. If the couple choose to be married according to the practice of the other faith concerned and the participation of a Christian minister is invited, the principles given in Paragraph 42 ~~44~~ can be applied. To refuse such an invitation when it is acceptable to the persons to be married and their families could be inimical to the good relations between the two communities that the occasion requires.

The need for pastoral care

37. Within all faith communities in Britain, marriage outside the faith is a difficult and sometimes controversial subject. Fears can arise that the person concerned will be lost to ~~his or her~~ **their** faith or that the whole community of faith will be weakened as a result of such a marriage. This can result in tension within the faith community, anguish for the parents and pain for the couple to be married. In some instances, prohibitions are in force, as when a woman is prohibited from marrying outside the faith. A person who seeks to marry someone of another faith can, therefore, feel abandoned by ~~his or her~~ **their** community or family and deprived of pastoral advice, an experience intensified when the person is breaking tradition, custom or law.
38. Pastoral care of the couple both before and after the marriage service is, therefore, essential. It is particularly important that the couple should be encouraged to talk to each other both about their respective faiths, so that respect for the faith of the other can develop, and also about what becoming an 'inter-faith family' involves; for example, the necessity of reaching decisions about the religious education of children or the funeral rites to be followed when a family member dies. Care should be taken by the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** that any advice given does justice to and does not misrepresent the faith to which the partner who is not a Christian adheres.
39. Pastoral care of the couple will be enhanced if local links of friendship can be developed between the two religious communities concerned. This can help the marriage to be accepted in both communities and open up opportunities for hospitality, ongoing support for the couple and trust-building between faiths.

¹⁰ For the guidelines adopted by the Conference of 2000, see ~~Part 9~~ **the next section below**

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

Conscience

40. No ~~one minister~~ should be required to officiate at a marriage service if it is against ~~his or her~~ **their** conscience. However, it should be remembered that hesitancy or refusal on the part of the ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant** could convey condemnation of the other faith, reinforce the couple's sense of isolation and hinder good community relations. An **authorised officiant** ~~minister~~ who is prevented by conscience from officiating should ensure that the couple is referred to a colleague not so prevented.

Preparation

41. It is important that the partner who belongs to another faith should be happy not only to take part in the Christian service but also to accept the Christian understanding of marriage as outlined in the Marriage Service. The ~~minister~~ **authorised officiant**, for example, should look for evidence in the couple of mutual respect and love, life-long commitment, faithfulness and the wish to grow together through life in friendship, wisdom and holiness.

Legal

42. Note should be taken of the requirements laid down by law, as given in *The Methodist Worship Book*. **Legal requirements should be complied with.**

Liturgical

43. ~~The Methodist Marriage Service~~ **The Methodist marriage services** and ~~'Blessing of a Marriage Service'~~ **orders for blessing of a marriage** each form a coherent and carefully-worded whole. However, it is possible within Methodism to add to or omit from the liturgy, as long as, in the Marriage Service, the words of declaration and the words of contract required by law remain. Therefore, in order to affirm respect for the beliefs and commitment of the partner from another faith, a prayer, hymns and/or readings from the other faith can be included. This could extend to an appropriate symbolic action from the other faith tradition. Consultation with the couple concerned is essential in this process. Nothing should be included without the consent of both parties and care should be taken that the additions are consonant with the Christian faith as a whole and the Christian concept of marriage.
44. Omissions from the liturgy should be minimal but examples might be phrases which one partner could not say in good conscience, for example the trinitarian formulations in Section 14 of the Marriage Service and Section 10 of the Blessing of Marriage Service. It might be acceptable to replace these with 'in the name of God' which could be said by both partners with good conscience.
45. The participation of a priest or religious leader from another faith community in a Christian marriage service would not normally be expected. However, where such participation
- is requested by the couple;
 - has the agreement of the other faith community; and
 - will not change the fundamental Christian nature of the service

it should be welcomed. To debar a leader from another faith from making a contribution from that faith tradition, for instance, would imply a lack of openness and trust on the part of the Christian community which could be very hurtful to the other partner and ~~his or her~~ **their** faith community and hinder the good relations between the two communities that the occasion requires. However, discernment should be used to ensure that any

involvement by a person from another faith enhances the service for the couple to be married and is acceptable to all the parties concerned.

Further Help

46. Further help, practical or pastoral, or referral to local contacts or specialist resource people, can be gained from the Connexional Team at Methodist Church House.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

28/1. The Conference received the Report.

28/2 The Conference directed that Part B shall be printed in Book VII (Guidance) of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* and that it will replace Parts 8 (*Christian Preparation for Marriage*), 9 (*Guidelines for Inter-Faith Marriages*) and 10 (*Marriage and Relationships: Good Relating, Cohabitation and Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage*).