

***FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE***

**Report of the International Dialogue  
between the Baptist World Alliance  
and the World Methodist Council**

**2018**

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## PREFACE

Over the course of five years of dialogue, there were many conversations. Some were structured and formal in sessions focused on the presentation of papers or within gatherings of worship and prayer. Others were unstructured and informal around the meal table, over the coffee pot, or in the common room. We found ourselves talking often about times when Methodists and Baptists joined together for worship and prayer, witness and mission, proclamation and protest, theological education and ecumenical unions, and in many other ways. We have included some of those stories in the text of our report to give an indication of what the themes we talked about look like in practice. These stories of collaboration and cooperation inspired us to deeper conversation and drew us to examine the obstacles, real and perceived, that stood in the way of fuller fellowship between our churches and increased participation in God's mission to the world.

We reflected on the challenge of the apostle Paul to make "every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). We were reminded that as Christians we have "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Eph 4:5). Our deep conversations led us to name the ties that bind us to the same Lord in a common faith, but we also came to recognize that one of the barriers to fuller expression of fellowship and mission was our different understandings and practices of baptism. One of the ecumenical texts we read together challenged us to engage in the work of mutual recognition, which involves recognizing one another as fellow Christians, recognizing our churches as authentic expressions of the one church of Jesus Christ, and recognizing one another's practice of baptism as the one baptism into Christ.<sup>1</sup> Through our conversations it became clear to us that Baptists and Methodists were prepared to fully recognize one another in the first two ways, but the third sense presented challenges.

Although some Baptists and Methodists might be able to make such a mutual recognition in this third sense, and indeed many are already doing so, it is our judgment that our wider communions of churches are not yet of one accord on the mutual recognition of baptism. Nevertheless, our conversations have given us hope to believe that these divergent understandings and practices of baptism are not an impasse that prevents Methodists and Baptists from joining more fully in worship, work, and witness. We were guided by other bilateral dialogues and ecumenical study documents that placed baptism within the whole process of Christian initiation in which new members are incorporated into the body of Christ.<sup>2</sup> This emphasis on baptism as part of the journey of Christian faith and discipleship is an important one. We offer these reflections from our dialogue in the hope that they will lead Baptists and Methodists toward greater unity of the faith that the world may believe (Jn 17:21).

We wish to express our thanks to our respective bodies, the Baptist World Alliance and the World Methodist Council, for initiating this dialogue through the then General Secretaries, Rev. Dr. Neville Callum and Bishop Ivan Abrahams.

Curtis W. Freeman and Tim Macquiban, Co-Chairs

## **PARTICIPANTS IN THE DIALOGUE**

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- Rev. Dr. Fausto Vasconcelos, Co-Secretary (2014-2016)  
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- Rev. Dr. Deji Isaac Ayegboyin  
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- Rev. Dr. Tim Macquiban, Co-Chair  
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## INTRODUCTION

### A Brief History of the Dialogue

An initial meeting was held at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London, in 2013 to explore the possibility of conversations between the Baptist World Alliance (represented by Neville Callam, Curtis Freeman, Timothy George, and Stephen Holmes) and the World Methodist Council (represented by Paul Chilcote, Robert Gribben, and Tim Macquiban). The respective bodies approved the inauguration of their first international dialogue. The Dialogue Commission took *Faith Working through Love* as its overall theme, with the design of exploring this topic under the rubrics of how this is sung and preached, confessed and remembered, lived and shared in the respective traditions. It agreed to meet in five plenary sessions with preparatory work between each of the meetings.

An initial communique set out the rationale for the dialogue, stating that “having been sent by our Lord Jesus Christ to continue the mission of God in the world (John 21:21), as Baptist and Methodist Christians we desire the unity for which our Savior prayed so that the world may believe (John 17:21) and in believing find its life (John 3:16-17). The words of St. Paul to the Galatian church served as a guidepost for the conversations and a mark of a united spirit: “the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (5:6). The primary purposes of this dialogue included:

- the quest for greater understanding and appreciation for one another,
- the mutual exchange of gifts for the enrichment and renewal of our churches,
- increased participation in a common witness and mission in the world,
- a fuller fellowship and cooperation by identifying and overcoming barriers.

The dialogue sessions were hosted alternatively by the Baptist and Methodist delegations, the first session being held January 30 – February 5, 2014 in Birmingham, Alabama, USA, hosted by Timothy George at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University. The purpose of this initial conversation was to explore the historical heritage, theological commitments, and contemporary global contexts of Methodists and Baptists. Participants came to know and appreciate one another, but more importantly came to recognize one another as brothers and sisters and fellow members of Christ's body, as they discussed issues related to their identities and primary characteristics.

In February 5 – 10, 2015 the dialogue was hosted by Malcolm Tan in Singapore at Covenant Community Methodist Church and examined the “faith confessed and remembered.” Papers addressed questions related to the nature of and authority in the churches and the critical topics of justification and sanctification in the respective traditions. The third session was held February 3 – 10, 2016 in Elstal, Germany, at the Baptist School of Theology, on the outskirts of Berlin. Hosted by Baptist Co-Secretary, Fausto Vasconcelos, participants examined the theme “Making Disciples: Baptism and Christian initiation.” Participants reflected on the historical, theological, liturgical, and ecumenical perspectives on baptism and the process of Christian initiation. They gave particular attention to reports on baptismal practice among Methodists and Baptists in different regions of the world.

Session Four was held in Jamaica, February 2 – 9, 2017, hosted by Christine Gooden-Benguiche and the Jamaica District of the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and Americas at Runaway Bay. Participants shared their vision of “grace and faith: sung and preached, lived and shared.”

Particular attention was devoted to the concept of works of piety and works of mercy in both traditions. Participants also reflected on the ways in which Baptists and Methodists express their identities through the practice of worship and preaching in different areas of the world. The final session of the dialogue was held March 14 – 21, 2018 in Salisbury, England, at Sarum College, with Tim Macquiban, Methodist Co-Chair hosting. The primary purpose of this final session was editing documents and producing the final draft of the Dialogue Report.

The work of this dialogue has been dependent, of course, on earlier ecumenical conversations. To our knowledge, this has been the first formal dialogue between the Baptist and Methodist traditions on an international scale. Two reports from previous dialogues between the Baptist World Alliance and the Roman Catholic Church that culminated in 1988 and 2010 provided helpful language around the issue of baptism. Ecumenical statements such as *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (the so-called “Lima Text”), Paper 111, and *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, Paper 210, of the World Council of Churches’ Faith and Order Commission, published in 1982 and 2011 respectively, continue to shape all conversations across the global church. The *Document of Mutual Recognition* (1990) reported on conversations among the Baptists, Methodists, and Waldensians in Italy, one of the few instances of dialogue on a national scale that involved both Baptists and Methodists.

### **Design of the Report**

This report closely follows the chronological unfolding of the conversation about doctrines and practices discussed in the consecutive sessions of the dialogue, along the lines set out by the dialogue commission. First, it describes the roots and heritage of the Baptist and Methodist traditions, exploring the areas of convergence, divergence, and the common concerns and challenges faced by these churches in a global context. This typical pattern for dialogues continues in the sections which follow.

These major sections address the discrete doctrinal areas of church and salvation, justification and sanctification, baptism and Christian initiation, worship and witness. The participants thought that it was important to include inspirational stories of support and cooperation among various Methodist and Baptist communities around the world. We also drew on the rich hymnody of the traditions which has been an important way in which faith is transmitted and expressed. The report of the dialogue team concludes with recommendations for action in the respective bodies. In addition to the formal report, the dialogue team has addressed the issue of its reception by providing a study guide to facilitate the reflection and conversation of the themes in a more accessible format for use in small study groups or to guide individual reading and reflection. The report concludes with a prayer, which confesses the continued sin of dividing Christ’s body and expresses the hopes and desires that Baptists and Methodists might give greater expression to our Lord’s prayer “that they may be one.” The report will be divided into paragraphs numbered consecutively throughout, to the end, to aid reference.

## I. HISTORY AND HERITAGE

### The Baptists

1. The Baptist movement as we know it today arose in pre-Revolutionary England in the context of persecution and dissent. While there are noted affinities between Baptist church life and earlier reforming movements such as the Lollards, the Waldensians, and the continental Anabaptists, modern historians recognize two separable beginnings for the English Baptist movement, the one associated with Separatists John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, out of which emerged the General Baptist tradition in seventeenth-century England, and the other issuing in the Particular Baptists, who emerged from offshoots of an independent congregation established by Henry Jacob at London in 1616. The Generals stressed the universal scope of Christ's atonement, while the Particulars were Calvinistic in soteriology.
2. Despite these and other differences, both groups understood the church as an intentional community composed of regenerated, repentant, and baptized believers, all bound to one another and to Jesus Christ by a solemn covenant. In this way early Baptists joined themselves together "in a holy union and fellowship" promising to "watch over" and to "stir up" one another to love and good works. Both covenantal and disciplinary features of church life were prominent among early Baptists. Baptist communities of faith did not understand themselves as mere voluntary associations but rather as originating in the *koinonia* of the triune life of God, gathered in history by the will of Christ, and guided by the indwelling of his Spirit.
3. Prior to the 1689 Act of Toleration, Baptists, with other dissenters, were often beaten, fined, and imprisoned for their faith. From such troubled and humble beginnings in England, Baptists have grown to become a major Protestant denomination that worships and serves God through Jesus Christ around the world. Born in the crucible of suffering, Baptists became ardent champions of an unconstrained conscience and religious freedom—not only for themselves but for all persons. Thomas Helwys, soon after establishing the first Baptist church on English soil in 1612, published a book, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, which he addressed to King James I. While respectful of the king's temporal authority, Helwys nonetheless declared that the king had no legitimate jurisdiction to coerce his subjects in matters of faith. He further extended the principle of religious freedom to all—Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and even pagans and atheists. Advocacy for religious freedom in many diverse political contexts has become a defining hallmark of the Baptist tradition.
4. Baptists are a missionary people. Inspired by the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival led by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, Baptists developed a robust theology of renewal and world mission. Prior to this, many Baptists in England had succumbed to Christological heterodoxy on the one hand and to an enervating unevangelical Calvinism on the other. Baptist pastor Andrew Fuller was a catalyst in helping Baptists of his day to move beyond these influences. He was influential in the shift to an evangelical proclamation of the gospel that urged Christians to proclaim Christ to all, especially to those who have never heard the gospel. Inspired by Fuller, William Carey helped to organize the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and then took the Gospel message to India the following year, thus opening a new epoch in the modern missionary

movement. Carey aimed to communicate the Gospel in such a way that it spoke to the total context of the people to whom it was addressed—contextualization. His pioneering work included Bible translation, education, church planting, agricultural reform, journalism, protest against the slave trade and other issues of human rights. Other Baptist leaders include Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson in Myanmar, George Lisle in Jamaica, Alfred Saker in Cameroon, Lottie Moon in China, and Johann Gerhard Oncken in continental Europe. It was Oncken who coined the phrase, “*Jeder Baptist ein Missionar!*” (Every Baptist a Missionary!).

5. Baptist churches in colonial America date from the 1630s but major growth in the New World stemmed from movements of revival and awakening, aided by the development of Baptist associations and mission societies. The Philadelphia Baptist Association was organized in 1707 and became a model for benevolence, educational, and missionary endeavors. Following the Civil War, many of the newly freed slaves formed discrete African-American Baptist denominations. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Baptist pastor who is recognized worldwide for his prophetic ministry and leadership in the Civil Rights Movement. Among other Baptist leaders known for their global influence are evangelist Billy Graham and former U.S. president Jimmy Carter.
6. In common with other Christian believers around the world, Baptists embrace the Trinitarian and Christological consensus of the early church. When the Baptist World Alliance was organized in 1905, the assembly stood to recite in unison the Apostles’ Creed, an act repeated one hundred years later at the centennial celebration. Baptists have also affirmed the central teachings of the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers, insofar as such beliefs are consonant with the Holy Scriptures. Baptists regard the Bible as the normative standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinion should be tried. But, while averse to “creedalism,” Baptists have often expressed their belief in various statements of faith, including confessions, covenants, and catechisms. In 1999, the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance published *We Baptists*, a document which aimed to declare what Baptists, as a global community of faith, shared with other Christians.<sup>3</sup>
7. Among some of the basic affirmations listed here are: “belief in the triune God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This eternal God is the creator of all things. Human beings, being tempted, fell into sin and out of fellowship with God. Jesus is the unique, incarnate Son of God, being also fully man, who died for our sins, rose again from the grave on the third day, and ascended to heaven, there to make intercession for his people. Those who trust in him become part of his church, being sealed by the Holy Spirit for eternal salvation, and Christ himself will one day appear in glory to consummate human history and bring in fully the reign of God.”
8. Baptists, it was said, also hold that justification is by God’s grace through faith alone; neither priest nor church stands between God and the individual Christian. They accept the Bible as the divinely authorized written norm for faith and practice. They stress the importance of the church within the purposes of God. And, in particular, Baptists have a strong belief in the presence of the risen Christ who bestows his Spirit and guides the life of his covenanted people.

9. “Baptist distinctives” should be understood in the context of the four classic attributes of the church found in the Nicene Creed: the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. For Baptists, the unity of the church derives from the Lordship of Christ. “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called: one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:4). The church is holy, not in the sense that it is a *cordon sanitaire* free from contagion on all sides, but rather because it is animated by the Holy Spirit and joined in vital union with its heavenly head, Jesus Christ. Among Baptists, the most notable aspect of catholicity is the global reach and worldwide missionary vision announced by Jesus himself when he commissioned his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). The church is thus catholic in three respects: its geographical extent, the church is not restricted to any particular place, kingdom, or nation but has spread over the whole world; its inclusive membership, gathered from all classes and ranks of human society; and its indefectibility, based on the promise of the risen Christ: “I will be with you always even to the end of the world” (Matt 28:20). Finally, the church is apostolic, not by virtue of a succession of duly ordained bishops, but because it is guided by the normative authority of the apostolic witness. Such is set forth in the canonical Scriptures and conveyed through public preaching, teaching, and worship.
10. Within this frame, in different contexts and in various ways, Baptists have developed a distinctive ethos of discipleship and church life characterized by the primacy of the local church; baptismal immersion for those who “profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to our Lord Jesus”; congregational church governance through which the “rule of Christ”—as Prophet, Priest, and King—guides the particular community of believers; the separation of church and state; the priesthood of all believers; a form of communal *episkope* that includes an ordered ministry of leaders called variously pastors, elders, bishops, deacons, overseers; and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper as both a sign and source of Christian unity, and a foretaste of the full coming of the reign of God, toward which it points. The church in all its aspects including its ministry, worship, and witness in the world stands under the Word of God.
11. Throughout their history, Baptists have differed and divided over many matters including, for example, predestination and freewill, the appropriateness of hymn singing in public worship, the laying on of hands for baptized believers, open or restricted communion, the ordination and calling of women in pastoral leadership, charismatic gifts of the Spirit, and so on. Nonetheless, the quest for Christian unity courses through Baptist life in various ways, stemming in part from Jesus’s own prayer that his disciples would be one, just as he and his heavenly Father are one. Such unity is directly related to the evangelistic mission of the church in the world: “May they be one, so that the world may know you have sent me” (John 17:20-23).
12. One of the earliest expressions of the desire for Baptist cooperation came from General Baptist Thomas Grantham in 1678: “I could heartily wish that all Congregations of Christians in the World that are baptized according to appointment of Christ would make one *Consistory* (at least some times) to consider of the matters in difference among them.”<sup>4</sup> More than two hundred years later, Grantham’s wish was realized with the formation of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905. The Preamble to its Constitution, as amended in 2005, states, “The Baptist World Alliance, extending over every appointment of Christ part of the world, exists as an expression of the essential oneness of Baptist people in the Lord Jesus

Christ, to impart inspiration to the fellowship, and to provide channels of sharing concerns and skills in witness and ministry. This Alliance recognizes the traditional autonomy and interdependence of Baptist churches and member bodies.”<sup>5</sup> Today there are 238 member bodies found in 124 countries and territories, representing some 168,885 churches with more than 47,976,960 million members. If one includes children and the larger community of worshipers, the number of Baptist believers in the world would be much more.<sup>6</sup> In addition to promoting understanding and cooperation among Baptist bodies and with other Christian groups, the BWA serves as a channel for expressing Christian social concern and alleviating human need, an agency of reconciliation seeking peace for all persons and upholding claims of justice and fundamental human rights, including full religious liberty.

13. In July 1990, the Baptist World Congress met in Korea and adopted The Seoul Covenant inviting members of the Baptist family to confess “that the mission in which we engage belongs to God. It is our joy and responsibility, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to be witnesses throughout the world to Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord. Since Baptists are part of the whole family of God, such witness calls us to pray and work with other Christians in this vital task. Believing that personal faith in Jesus Christ involves commitment to his body, the Church, we aim to build communities that will be effective signs of God’s Kingdom in the world. We confess that inherent within the Gospel is the need for God’s people to work for a world where peace and justice are pursued, and whose environment is preserved. Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. He is the center around which our lives revolve. He is the sovereign presence in the Kingdom in which we live and work. His truth is eternal, his love unchanging, his grace sufficient. To him we commit our lives totally, joyfully, unreservedly. To God be the glory.”<sup>7</sup>

### **The Methodists**

14. John and Charles Wesley were loyal priests and theologians of the Church of England who lived during the eighteenth century. They launched a movement of renewal in hopes of being the instruments of the Spirit to breathe new life into their beloved Church. This Wesleyan revival was actually part of a much larger movement of the Spirit that gave rise to Moravian Pietism on the European continent, a Calvinistic form of Methodism in Britain, and the First Great Awakening in America. John (1703-1791), the older brother, expressed his understanding of the Christian faith primarily in sermons, theological treatises, and discussions of the scriptures. Charles (1707-1788), one of the greatest hymn-writers of all time, blended belief and praise to create a unique lyrical theology of God’s love. Both were deeply concerned about a form of Christian discipleship that combined vital piety and social action, the recovery of a rich sacramental spirituality, and the need to translate saving faith into concrete acts of mission and service in the world.
15. Methodism was shaped by and rooted in Anglicanism, and the followers of the Wesleys embraced the vision of the Christian faith articulated in the historic *Articles of Religion* of the Church of England. But other historical movements and individuals shaped this movement as well, including Continental Pietism, with its emphasis on growth in grace in the context of small group fellowship; English Puritanism, a bedrock feature of the Wesleys’ home in which they learned the importance of simplicity and sanctity in life and worship; Roman Catholicism, particularly the practical mysticism of Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) which emphasized purity of intention and humility; and Eastern Orthodoxy,

with its vision of spiritual restoration and the goal of perfect love, exemplified by Clement of Alexandria.

16. For Methodists, who conceive Christianity as a dynamic process of both knowing and living the faith, Scripture plays a particularly formative role; the Bible is the source of all that is “necessary” and “sufficient” unto salvation and “is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice.”<sup>8</sup> But God’s self-revelation in Scripture is balanced by tradition, reason, and experience (the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral). The living core of the Christian faith revealed in Scripture is “illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason.”<sup>9</sup>
17. John Wesley made a point to let people know there were no Methodist distinctives other than those characteristics associated with what he called “old or primitive Christianity.” In a small tract entitled “The Character of a Methodist,” he sought to describe the noble simplicity of Christian discipleship in terms of the knowledge and love of God and growth in grace. He describes a Methodist as anyone who is inwardly and outwardly conformed to the will of God as revealed in the written Word, who thinks, speaks, and lives according to the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ, who is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and in all true holiness, and who has the mind that was in Christ, so as to walk even as Christ also walked. These are the ideals toward which Methodists strive. Whether preached or sung, these spiritual re-discoveries of the Wesleys and their Methodist followers revitalized the life of the church in their own time.
18. The Methodist movement spread quickly, first in Britain and Ireland, then to the Americas and Caribbean islands, Australasia, continental Europe, and eventually throughout Asia and Africa. Across the globe, Methodists have been noted for their work in mission, education, and ecumenism in particular. Thomas Coke, through his 1784 “Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions among the Heathens,” helped pioneer the great missionary movement of the early nineteenth century. Isabella Thoburn established educational institutions in North India and helped Lucy Rider Meyer expand the influence of the deaconess movement within Methodism. Women figured prominently within Methodism from its origins as leaders and preachers. Within the historic black Methodist denominations, for example, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Julia A. J. Foote, and Amanda Berry Smith courageously preached the gospel. The Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, founded in 1869, gave expression to the Methodist concern for the ministry of all God’s people. Among other Methodist leaders known for their global influence are the Methodist layman who helped launch the modern ecumenical movement, John R. Mott, and the African liberator, Nelson Mandela.
19. A wide variety of Christian Churches today, many of which still retain the term Methodist in their titles, trace their roots back to the religious revival spearheaded by the Wesleys and the evangelistic efforts of their followers. Methodists consider themselves to be but one part of the universal community of God’s people that stretches across time and space. Generally attempting to maintain a wide embrace and to celebrate diversity within the community of faith – while acknowledging the many tensions and conflicts that challenge the quest for unity – Methodists also seek new ways to be in partnership with brothers and sisters in Christ in other parts of the Christian family so as to manifest the unity of the Church, to the end that the world might believe.

20. The World Methodist Council, meeting in Nairobi in 1986, adopted a brief theological statement entitled “Saved By Grace” listing the basic tenets of the universal Christian tradition to which all Methodists adhere.<sup>10</sup> This statement affirms Methodist acceptance of The Apostles’ Creed and the first four ecumenical councils of the Church, following the Anglican tradition. It affirms the primary teachings set forth in The Nicene Creed: the doctrine of the Trinity; the person of Christ, the divine Word made flesh, fully God and fully human; and the doctrine of redemption. Methodists share with all Christians the belief that salvation is the work of the Triune God; that scripture reveals God’s gracious work of creation and redemption; that all people need salvation since all are sinners and are incapable of saving themselves; that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the Savior of the world; and that the Holy Spirit is God present and active in the world for its healing and redemption. The Nairobi statement also points out distinctive Methodist emphases on Christian assurance and sanctification, or holiness of heart and life that were shared by the ancient Church and are prominent in the apostolic teachings of the New Testament.
21. In 1996 the World Methodist Conference meeting in Rio de Janeiro adopted a document entitled “Wesleyan Essentials of the Christian Faith.”<sup>11</sup> This statement identifies the beliefs, service, common life, worship, and witness that are central to the Methodist ethos. Shaped by the Holy Scriptures, guided by the apostolic teaching, and rooted in the grace of God, faith in Jesus transforms lives and renews minds into the image of Christ. The community of faith exists to worship the Triune God, who nourishes the faithful through the means of grace and calls believers to become sacred instruments of justice and peace. Methodists seek to proclaim and live God’s will for the salvation of all humankind, to embody God’s love through acts of mercy and healing, and to celebrate God’s reign. Methodists strive for a common heart and life, committing themselves to the solidarity of nurture, outreach, and witness. They seek to serve, rather than to be served and to express God’s love through sensitivity, compassion, and commitment to holiness of heart and life, refusing to separate conversion and justice, piety and mercy, faith and love.
22. It is typical to describe the Methodist understanding of the Christian faith as a “theology of grace.” The Wesleys proclaimed the “free grace” of God and consistently preached about God’s “inclusive love.” Methodists, therefore, believe that we encounter God’s grace in the preaching and hearing of God’s Word, the regular celebration of the Eucharist (or Lord’s Supper), the life of active love, and the singing hymns of faith in praise of God. Christian discipleship begins with God’s offer of relationship to all, but it is extended by means of fellowship or shared experience within the community of faith. Compassionate witness is the inevitable fruit of faithful discipleship, expressed through mission and service in the life of the Church. Methodists hold a theology that joins “sound knowledge and vital piety” and are moved by Christian compassion and concern for justice and peace in human society. This concern resulted in the Methodist foundation of hospitals, schools, universities, and caring institutions across the world.
23. The World Methodist Council, founded originally as the Oecumenical Methodist Conference in 1881, is a worldwide association of 80 Methodist, Wesleyan, and related Uniting and United Churches representing over 80.5 million people. It engages, advises, and serves the member Churches by encouraging Methodist unity in witness, facilitating mission in the world, and fostering ecumenical and inter-religious activities. It promotes obedience to the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ to love God and neighbor and to

fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples through vibrant evangelism, a prophetic voice, cooperative programs, faithful worship, and mutual learning. Churches in the Methodist tradition stand within the continuity of the one universal Church, confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, worshipping the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, preaching the one gospel, and accepting the authority of Holy Scripture and the historic creeds of the early church.

### **Observations, Reflections, and Challenges**

24. The dialogue began by exploring together the roots of our traditions and their development in past centuries, discovering that there were many convergences and similarities as two religious groups who share common roots in English Protestant Christianity, and share particular influences from the Puritan and Evangelical movements.
25. Both movements are post-Reformation renewal movements understanding themselves as a work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the wider church. Both traditions have been nourished by the Puritan heritage of the seventeenth century and have been shaped and widely influenced by the Pietistic streams of European religious history and of the evangelical revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
26. While exploring our similarities as post-Reformation religious movements of revival and reform, there were nevertheless some clear distinctions between Baptists and Methodists that were noted. In Baptist history there is not a commonly held view of the origins and pre-history of the religious groups which emerged and no dominant personalities. In Methodist history there is generally a strong emphasis on the founders of the movement and their legacy, i.e., the personal role of John and Charles Wesley. Baptist life has also been significantly shaped by the Wesleys. The early Baptist hymnals contained hymns by Charles Wesley, which made a lasting impact on Baptist worship. Baptist life on both sides of the Atlantic was revitalized by the evangelical revivals of the eighteenth century. Wesleyan convert and Methodist lay preacher, Dan Taylor, formed the New Connection of the General Baptists in 1770, which revived the General Baptist denomination and was instrumental in the formation of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.
27. Both are pioneer world missionary movements involved in the spread of the gospel to the Americas and the Caribbean, to Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Both sought to focus their mission work through missionary societies under the auspices of missionaries sent by the respective churches and extended through those mentored and trained for mission work.
28. In their histories Baptist and the Methodist traditions have tended to fragment. We acknowledge that we have not always been faithful to our Lord's call to unity. This tendency toward division also has had ecclesiological, social, and political foundations in their unique social contexts. The emergence and development of General and Particular Baptists, of Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodists in our earliest years, as well as northern and southern churches in the United States illustrates this common element in our respective histories. In some contexts, the divisions of the nineteenth century were healed by a new ecumenical spirit and variety of unions achieved in the twentieth.
29. Both movements have been challenged by issues surrounding gender and race. Both Baptists and Methodists, while recognizing and affirming the gifts of women, faced particular challenges in using these gifts in ministry and mission (though women were

engaged in supporting and subsidiary roles). Both movements were also challenged by issues of race and slavery resulting in divisions and lasting animosity, the scars of which affect many of our churches. The growth of indigenous churches in reaction to the planting of colonial-dominated churches has added to the variety and vitality of churches in both denominations.

30. For both Baptists and Methodists education, health, and broader social development were integral parts of their mission work in the building of schools and hospitals. But both traditions experienced some initial and negative reactions to the social gospel movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when social work seemed divorced from the call to conversion and the proclamation of the gospel. Both movements, however, have experienced a reconciliation of tensions between evangelical, holiness, and social gospel streams driven apart in the early twentieth century. A holistic approach to mission remains at the core of the movements. Both movements in some parts of the world exhibit the marks of revivalism which have invigorated, expanded and challenged the churches.
31. Reaching out to the poor and the underclasses in reaction to seeming establishment indifference marked out both groups as counter-cultural movements of nonconformity. Both Methodists and Baptists affirm the place of religious freedom in society but the prominent role of the struggle for religious freedom has been far greater in the Baptist movement.
32. The preaching of the Word and singing of hymns and disciple-making in the building up of the Christian life in the context of missions is a shared emphasis. Baptist and Methodist preachers and hymn writers have made a contribution much wider than their own particular denominations.
33. The classical marks of evangelicalism as delineated in the evangelical quadrilateral, which include a strong commitment to biblical authority, a focus on the redeeming work of Christ on the cross, the experience of conversion as essential to Christian life, and the conviction that the gospel must be put into action, are prominent in both traditions from the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>
34. Baptists and Methodists see the call to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ (Mt 28:19-20) as paramount in their church life and as such they were both sending churches engaged in missions from the late eighteenth century around the world.
35. In terms of Christian life both Methodists and Baptists try to find ways to teach and guide Christians to live faithful, biblical, and holy lives, working together in Christian education, nurture and growth. Methodists and Baptists see faith and practice as integral to one another, and often act together in social witness as in the Joint Public Issues Team of the British Baptist, Methodist and Reformed Churches. [[www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)]
36. Methodists and Baptists are drawn together, not primarily because of a previously agreed upon shared theology where doctrinal differences are minimized, but because they find themselves already involved in the mission of God in the world. This is not to say that Methodists and Baptists would say that doctrine and theology are unimportant, but we do not have to work out all the fine points in order to work together—and we often clarify our shared life and own distinctiveness by walking together.

## Story 1 – *Sam Sharpe and the Abolition of Slavery*

The Methodist Mission in Jamaica began in 1789, when Thomas Coke arrived on one of his journeys to the West Indies. William Hammett arrived six months after and was the first Methodist missionary. The work of the Baptists originated in 1783 with the arrival of George Liele, a Baptist freed slave from the USA. Methodist and Baptist preachers planted the seeds of revolution and laid a theological framework for emancipation, teaching slaves that “no one can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24). Sam Sharpe, a creole slave and Baptist preacher, encouraged his followers to stand up for themselves. This led to a slave revolt, several hundred slaves were killed, and Baptist and Methodist chapels were destroyed. Sharpe was hanged on the gallows on May 23, 1832. Methodist and Baptist missionaries continued to work together until full abolition of slavery on August 1, 1834.<sup>13</sup> “My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee.”<sup>14</sup>

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Isaac Watts (1719)

## II. CHURCH, AUTHORITY, AND SALVATION

### Introduction

37. As Baptists and Methodists, we rejoice in our agreement on the cardinal points of the faith as contained in the Apostles' Creed, including the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ. As we have explored in Section I, we share common roots in English Protestant Christianity, through particular influences from Puritan, Pietist, and other evangelical movements.
38. Both our traditions emphasize the importance of personal piety, i.e., we both stress that the Christian life should be both experiential and active. Our two traditions have placed great emphasis on conversion experience, and on a continued experience of grace nurtured through private prayer, sharing in corporate worship, and other ways. At the same time we have both stressed (as the title of our report suggests) that true faith always works through love and we are both committed to working for social justice and social transformation in the name of Christ. In this context, both our communions are committed to defending and promoting freedom of conscience.
39. We share a commitment to the importance of lived local Christian community, and to the joining of local churches in broader fellowships. We differ on other areas of ecclesiology and authority in particular our different visions of how our traditions relate to the universal church.

### Church

40. Baptists and Methodists believe that because the church is a gift of the triune God, and founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it is one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic. We understand the church to be grounded in the communion (*koinonia*) between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though our churches are apparently separated and divided, they are in reality united because together we share "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph 4:4-6). The willingness of many Methodists and Baptists around the world to share in the same Eucharistic celebration demonstrates the reality and seriousness of this conviction. The one church is holy because Christ the head is holy and because God's people are made holy through the Holy Spirit. They claim and cherish their place in the catholic/universal church. We recognize that the gifts and ministries evident in the apostolic communities are present in our own. We share the conviction that these apostolic gifts and ministries are particularly meaningful when the church is engaged in the mission of God. We hold that Christ is the center of the church's life, and, so believe that as we draw closer to Christ, we will inevitably come closer to one another, thus exhibiting the visible marks of Christ and his church.
41. Methodists and Baptists recognize that the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church becomes visible and manifest where the word of God is preached and the sacraments/ordinances are celebrated. This restoration of the place of preaching was a gift to the wider church following the Protestant Reformation which we both have gratefully received and emphasized in our communal lives. We believe the church is centered on and grounded in the Word of God, which is manifested in Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word, the Holy Scriptures as the written Word, and the preaching of the gospel as the proclaimed Word.

42. Baptists and Methodists understand the church as God's new creation by Spirit and the Word, for it is God's Word that calls the church into being and God's Spirit that draws the church into fellowship. We share a belief that God has repeatedly renewed the Church through history by raising up new prophetic movements; we each understand our own origins to be in such a movement. We believe that the church is a visible communion of saints joined together in covenant, being baptized by one Spirit into the Body of Christ and renewing this baptismal covenant by gathering often at the Lord's table. We share an understanding of the church as a pilgrim community, walking together in the light that has been received and in openness to the reception of new light along the journey.
43. Methodists and Baptists believe that Christ is present through the Spirit in every gathered congregation that assembles in his name and professes faith in him, especially in the celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We share an understanding of the nature of fellowship in the local church to be one of walking together under the rule of Christ and watching over one another in love. In Baptist life this has often been expressed in church meeting; in Methodist life it is a particular feature of the class system. We recognize that local congregation is wholly the church but not the whole church, for there is only one Church of God, whether it is expressed locally or universally. We affirm that the same triune God, who draws the church into fellowship with God and one another, sends the church into mission to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the triune God, and teaching them to live in faithful obedience to God (Mt 28:19-20).
44. The tensions between a more locally autonomous church polity and a more connectional system of church, with different degrees of connectedness with other groups, associations, conventions and unions, are experienced in both traditions with different emphases. The oversight of churches in connectional and/or congregational models with or without bishops is varied across and within the denominations.
45. Baptist polity is congregational, that is, each gathered community under the rule of Christ is free to determine the shape and direction of its life together, including baptismal practice and reception into membership. Even though Baptists regard each congregation as wholly the church, they do not see it as the whole of the church. Thus their congregational conviction is matched by an associational principle. A congregation enters into wider association voluntarily, and the authority of the association is advisory, respecting the integrity of the local congregations and not imposing on a congregation a decision that it does not approve. Baptists do not generally regard these wider denominational associations to be expressions of "a Baptist Church." Methodist polity is connectional, that is, congregations are related to the annual Conference, in which they are represented, but which is the arena for decisions for the whole church. In one sense, Methodism is a single church, but every voice is represented in its councils of oversight and governance. Methodism is thus connectional in its ecclesial organization, while Baptist polity derives authority from local congregations.
46. If the church is constituted by word and sacraments, and if there is not mutual recognition of the authenticity of the sacraments, how do Baptists and Methodists regard the "churchly" (i.e., ecclesial) status of one another's communities? In the light of the widespread reality of shared mission, ministry, and Eucharistic life amongst Methodists and Baptists around the world it seems our local communities so recognize each other, but it is not always clear on what basis they do. In the light of the above reflection, it appears that these ecclesiological

models witness to a unity that is not yet visible and that is not dependent on shared structures. Nevertheless we recognize that Baptist and Methodist congregations in many and varied ways appear to be willing to recognize and share each other's lives and mission.

47. Methodists and Baptists understand the church as both a company of saints separated from "the world" and as a school for sinners saved by grace. The former understanding arises from the emphasis on visible holiness shared by our two traditions; the latter from our shared historic commitment to evangelization. Yet it is not apparent how our two communities might resolve such apparent tensions and find ways of understanding the nature of the church that can be shared with each other and offer to the wider Church.

### **Scripture and Authority**

48. The One with all authority in heaven and on earth is the one Lord Jesus Christ, and he is both its source and its model; authority among his disciples can only ever be "cruciform." Methodist and Baptist traditions are both suspicious of hierarchical understandings of authority within the church. We sought other words – e.g. "Christian discipleship" – but we cannot set aside "authority." We do not deny the possibility of cruciform exercises of authority in a hierarchical body—indeed, we rejoice at visible examples, both historically and in the present day—but we share a concern that hierarchies may not be well-suited to the development and exercise of cruciform authority.
49. Methodists and Baptists both affirm the priesthood of all believers. For both Baptists and Methodists, this is a corporate reality: all believers (or all members of a local covenanted congregation) together are a priesthood, but this does not imply that each one is a priest apart from the rest of the church. On this basis, both of our traditions have also insisted on setting apart certain people for certain ministries within our congregations. We have both insisted and practiced that the pastoral care and discipling work of the church is not to be reserved to ministers or other church officers. We both believe that the church's life is marked by a mutual watching over one another in love, and this privilege and responsibility is shared by all in the covenanted community.
50. The Scriptures bear witness to Christ as the one true living Word of God, and he is the key to the understanding of the Scriptures (Lk 24:27; Jn 5:39). Methodists and Baptists are "Bible people," "Bible Christians." All we do is rooted in Scripture; John Wesley said he was *homo unius libri*, a man of one book. Similar slogans describing a wholehearted commitment to search out and follow the teachings of the Bible abound in Baptist life also. Methodists and Baptists both recognize as authoritative the same biblical canon of writings comprising the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.
51. The Scriptures are the final rule of faith and practice and the prime norm for all other sources of religious knowledge, including tradition, experience, and reason. Methodists and Baptists both hold to *sola scriptura* in the sense of *suprema scriptura* (i.e., the primacy and supremacy of Scripture), not *nuda scriptura* (i.e., Scripture only to the exclusion of all other sources of knowledge). We are grateful for those who have engaged in scholarly and devotional study of the Bible, through which our faith has been enriched and deepened.
52. We recognize the limitations and dangers of "private interpretation" of Scripture which does not seek the wisdom of the wider interpretive community of the church. To take decisions, we both share a communal hermeneutic, in the gathered local congregation for

Baptists and in the conferences of Methodists. We also observe that there are different ways to receive the teaching of the Bible within each tradition. Some Methodists will put a particular emphasis on reading the Bible alongside tradition, using reason and experience as God's gifts for measuring their interpretation of the Bible. This hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible is known as "the Wesleyan Quadrilateral."<sup>15</sup>

53. Methodists and Baptists both affirm as normative for faith the tradition expressed in the ancient ecumenical creeds, which was transmitted by the apostles and handed over through the course of time by the church, and which continues to be affirmed and expressed in new and vital ways in contemporary contexts. Apostolic tradition is to be distinguished from subsequent ecclesiastical traditions.
54. Baptists and Methodists recognize that Scripture is not to be understood in an oppositional sense to tradition, but rather is best understood in continuity with tradition. Methodists and Baptists have benefitted from recent ecumenical explications of the relationship between Scripture and tradition, and have discovered afresh the mutual co-inherence of Scripture and tradition.
55. Methodists and Baptists both have guiding and identifying foundational church documents. On the Baptist side these include: the First London Confession (1644/6), the Second London Confession (1677/89), the New Hampshire Confession (1833), the Baptist Faith and Message (1963), the BWA Seoul Covenant (1990) and Centennial Statement (2005).<sup>16</sup> On the Methodist side these include: for the British Methodist Church, the Deed of Union 1932, for the Evangelical United Brethren, its Confession of Faith, and for the United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline*.<sup>17</sup>
56. Baptists and Methodists hold the notion of covenant to be significant in understanding the common life in Christ. Many Baptists read their congregational covenant regularly, often in the context of celebrating communion, and many Methodists celebrate a service of covenant renewal annually, generally including the Eucharist. This practice of covenant making and renewal has a common base in the Puritan traditions of our forebears. We recognize a contextual character in our local churches – hence their variety in different cultures and historical situations. We recognize freedom to apply the one Gospel in the local or national contexts.
57. Methodists and Baptists have historically used catechisms in the instruction in the faith; and both denominations now share a need to find effective ways of passing the faith to the rising generation. We have both found hymns to be an important way of confessing the faith, but they are also an important means of transmitting the catholicity of the faith in the worship of the local congregation. Singing the faith is an important part of both our communities.

### **Justification and Sanctification**

58. With regard to our understanding of salvation, our two traditions begin with a vital experience of grace. We believe that human beings are in need of salvation, and God graciously offers redemption through Jesus Christ. The grace of God is, in its essence, God's saving love, rooted in the reconciling life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We agree that the basic reality of salvation is union with Christ. Justification and sanctification both spring from this one basic reality. These two dynamic aspects of

redemption are distinct realities that can never be separated. “Faith” and “union with Christ” are, in a sense, two sides of the same reality. Faith is the human act by which we apprehend God’s gracious gift of salvation. Union with Christ is the basic reality of the salvation apprehended by faith. Justification and sanctification, therefore, are wholly the work of God’s Spirit.

59. Our common vision with regard to justification springs from the same broadly Reformed tradition. In accordance with the Scriptures, we believe that human beings are justified by God’s grace in Christ received freely through faith alone. The true essence of this faith is trust in God and God’s promises. The following statement from the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification expresses well our shared understanding:

In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.<sup>18</sup>

60. Sanctification, being made holy, is the gracious work of God’s Holy Spirit and is always preceded by justification. On the one hand, this holiness is complete in the forgiveness of sins when God justifies and reconciles human beings through Christ. On the other, it is God’s continuous work in the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit, calling, gathering, and equipping us to live as those dedicated to the care and redemption of all that God has made. We agree that new birth is integrally related to the process of sanctification and necessary for salvation. The final goal of this faith working through love is Christlikeness, or holiness, without which “no one shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).
61. Several common practices follow from this shared and dynamic view of salvation in both our traditions. We find testimony and spiritual narrative to be crucial elements in the expression of faith. We share a common hymnody. Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is a vital means of expressing this vision. Given the stress placed on growth in grace toward Christlikeness, we find practices of mutual accountability and “watching over one another in love” to be central to the Christian life. We remain open to the role of individual and communal times of renewal and revival. This hymn by Charles Wesley gives voice to our common conviction of God’s saving work.

Plead we thus for faith alone,  
Faith which by our works is shown;  
God it is who justifies,  
Only faith the grace applies,  
Active faith that lives within,  
Conquers earth, and hell, and sin,  
Sanctifies, and makes us whole,  
Forms the Saviour in the soul.

Charles Wesley (1780)

## **Divergent Emphases**

62. Methodists and Baptists rejoice in the salvation made available by God through the Spirit in Jesus Christ, but have developed different technical terms to describe this shared reality, and have placed different levels of emphasis on certain aspects of it. Methodists will name the fullness of salvation as “perfect love” and “entire sanctification,” phrases that are foreign to Baptist ears (although Methodists are also now somewhat nervous of the language of perfection unless it is carefully explained). Baptists see the fullness of salvation in solely eschatological terms, looking to resurrection and glorification rather than any state achievable in this life.
63. Scripture and later Christian theology give us many metaphors for sin and salvation, and the metaphors we habitually use do shape our understandings. Baptists have generally been comfortable to follow the Reformed tradition of using “forensic” language, talking primarily of sin as law breaking and salvation as forgiveness. Methodists also use this language, but have emphasized more therapeutic metaphors of sin as disease or disability and salvation as restoration to wholeness. Methodists will speak of salvation as “the renewal of the image of God.” These differing dominant metaphors lead to differing understandings, for instance Baptists tend to emphasize the *imputation* of righteousness, the divine declaration that the sinner is forgiven, whereas Methodists tend to emphasize the *impartation* of righteousness, the divine gift by which we live progressively more holy lives. These are differences of emphasis, not disagreements, but they are differences.
64. Methodists use the term “Christian perfection” to describe the goal of the Christian life in this world, language which Baptists would not normally use. Baptists do, however, believe that the Christian grows in holiness throughout her or his life, and acknowledge that some believers come to live exemplary lives by loving God and neighbor. Given the qualifications and explanations that Methodists attach to their language of “perfection,” it is possible that Baptists may be able to affirm what Methodists mean by “Christian perfection” even if they do not use the term.
65. Methodists understand social holiness as both communal sanctification and social transformation. Baptists would certainly affirm the first, believing that covenanted believers grow in holiness together or not at all. There is also a strong, although not uncontroversial, witness to social transformation within the Baptist tradition—Martin Luther King is the obvious example. Baptists would not instinctively term either of these “social holiness,” however, and would be confused by the suggestion that communal sanctification and social transformation are examples of the same reality.

### **Story 2 – *Methodist Missionaries’ and Baptist Missionary in Abeokuta, Nigeria (1850-1852)***

Association between the Baptist Mission and the Wesleyan Methodist Mission dates back to the very beginning of Baptist work in Nigeria. This spirit of ecumenism was exhibited by the collaboration by some of the early Methodist and Baptist missionaries in Abeokuta in Nigeria. Rev. Thomas Jefferson Bowen, the pioneer Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria arrived in Abeokuta South western Nigeria, on his way to commence Baptist work in the interior of Yorubaland. Before Bowen arrived in August 1850, the WMMS and the CMS missionaries had arrived in September 1842 and December 1842 respectively and

they offered him corporate hospitality for months. Bowen had thought that he would just have a stopover in Abeokuta but he was warned not to proceed into the hinterland because of the political unrest and the internecine war. Bowen was compelled to stay in Abeokuta for eighteen months between 1850 and 1851. During this time, he was generously hosted by the Wesleyan and the CMS missionaries, even though Bowen was deeply committed to his responsibilities as a missionary. He could not open the Baptist mission for almost two years from his arrival. During this period he became familiar with the region, learning Yoruba, the language of the people, as well as their culture and habits. This favorable condition gave Bowen the chance to do a pioneering study of Yoruba language entitled *Grammar and Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language*, which was later published in 1858 by the Smithsonian Institute. This book was of immense help to many missionaries who came to the Yorubaland, and it was made possible by ecumenical hospitality and cooperation between missionaries.<sup>19</sup>

### **Story 3 – Cooperation in Southeast Asia**

Methodist missionaries launched their work in Singapore in 1885 under the leadership of James Thoburn, a seasoned missionary risk-taker. His vision was for this small island to become the springboard for mission to other Southeast Asian communities. In this evangelistic work Methodism actually owes a great debt to the Baptists of Rangoon. Arriving there, in mainland Southeast Asia, at the height of the monsoon season Baptists provided hospitality and support to the beleaguered Thoburn. “We were kindly received by Baptist friends,” he wrote, “and invited to use the small chapel, in which at that time the Baptist missionaries held their English service.” As a consequence of this initial support from Baptist friends, Thoburn planted Methodism deeply in Burmese soil through revivals in this chapel. It is not too much to say that Methodism spread far from this into the island world of Southeast Asia, from Singapore to the Philippines.

The church's one Foundation  
is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is His new creation,  
by water and the Word;  
From heav'n He came and sought her  
to be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her,  
and for her life He died.

Samuel Stone (1866)

### III. BAPTISM AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION

66. As Baptists and Methodists in dialogue, we have discovered many things we hold in common in this critical matter of baptism, and a number of significant matters over which we presently disagree. We have also noted a wide divergence on some issues *within* each church. We have found that we sometimes use the same language, but mean different things by it. And we have rejoiced to discover that in many ways in recent years, we have been coming closer as we have understood each other's historical and theological contexts.

#### Baptismal Practice

67. As Baptists and Methodists we are grateful for the consensus statement in *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, which states that "while the possibility that infant baptism was also practiced in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested practice in the New Testament documents."<sup>20</sup> It is commonly said that "Baptists only baptize adults" and "Methodists only baptize infants." Neither is true: Baptists baptize *believers*, and congregations may make a judgment that the faith expressed by a young person is authentic and that they are ready to undertake the responsibilities of baptized members. Methodists have always been ready to baptize appropriate candidates of any age, and apply the same tests as Baptists in the case of those able to speak for themselves. Methodists have followed the practice of the Anglican tradition which nurtured the Wesleys, and which tradition, they held to be scriptural. Baptists in turn understand their observance to be a recovery of the primitive practice as taught in the New Testament.
68. It is generally thought that Baptists baptize by immersion and Methodists pour or sprinkle water on the candidate's head. There are, however, variations of baptismal practices within our churches. Sometimes that variety has been narrowed by the very existence of our Christian neighbors. Methodists have long defended their theology and practice in relation to Baptist teaching, and Baptists have similarly distinguished themselves from Methodist practice. Controversy and competition between Baptists and Methodists have too often exacerbated and accentuated the differences.
69. Though the practices of our churches may differ, Baptists and Methodists are committed to the historic Christian tradition of baptizing with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to the end of making disciples. God's mission calls us to introduce people to Christ and work with them towards the goal of full Christian maturity. Our churches are committed to the Great Commission to go into all nations and make disciples and to the Great Assurance (Mt 28:20b) that causes us to rejoice in the continuing presence of our risen Lord in this common mission. We recognize that the typical baptismal practices of our churches are divergent and seemingly incompatible, but we also recognize that through one another's practices true disciples are made.

#### Baptism and the Process of Initiation

70. Our intention as Baptists and Methodists is that baptism administered with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is an unrepeatable event. Although we agree that Christian baptism is to be received only once, we are not in full agreement that infant baptism is genuine baptism. Methodists hold that baptism, whether of infants or believers, may be observed only once. Consequently, they object when Christians baptized as infants

must be rebaptized in order to belong to a Baptist congregation. It is important to understand that Baptists do not intend to practice rebaptism. Most Baptists do not accept infant baptism to be genuine baptism, and therefore they do not regard the baptism of a believer previously baptized as an infant to be the repetition of baptism. Some Baptists, however, do affirm the working of grace in infant baptism and recognize it within the journey of faith and discipleship. Nor is it helpful to suggest as some do that infant baptizing churches intend only “christening” when they baptize. The baptismal practices of Methodists and Baptists intentionally seek to be faithful observances of our Lord’s command to baptize, and both are opposed to re-baptism.

71. We do not regard Christian baptism as merely a matter of the outward form. We affirm that both the apostolic deposit of faith (the faith once delivered to the saints) and personal living faith (as trust in Christ) are integral to our baptismal practice. Together we perceive the truth of the triune God in the Holy Scriptures and in the ancient baptismal creed known as the Apostles’ Creed, as a faithful declaration of apostolic teaching. We are mindful that the Great Commission links baptism and making disciples with that teaching. We acknowledge one another as companions on the way in ecumenical conversation.
72. We both affirm that covenant in relation to the practice of baptism and discipleship shapes the nature and character of our communities. For Baptists the notion of covenant describes our concept of the church as a community of disciples gathered by Word and Spirit (Mt 18:20). Methodists similarly recognize the importance of the church as a covenant community. We both share an understanding of baptism as a sign of God’s covenant that binds us to God and God’s people through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The covenant-making and covenant-renewal elements of our two traditions emphasize the nature of the church as *koinonia*.
73. Recent ecumenical dialogues have begun to speak of baptism within a process of initiation or a journey of Christian beginnings in order to recognize the operation of grace prior to the reception of faith. They recognize that in order to recover the full meaning and significance of baptism it is necessary to see baptism as a process and more than a single event. As Baptists and Methodists we both also consider that the process of baptism and Christian initiation involves repentance, faith and conversion/new birth followed by holy living. In our conversations we have found it helpful to understand that the “one baptism” (Eph 4:5) Christians are called to manifest is not merely a single act, but part of an extended process.<sup>21</sup> Such an approach moves beyond comparison of the ways baptism is differently practiced as a single event and moves toward thinking about the varying ways of understanding the whole journey of Christian initiation. This journey includes baptism, but also Christian nurture, responsible faith, communion for the first time, and commissioning for service.
74. Baptists and Methodists might understand their divergent approaches as alternate patterns of the process of Christian initiation. Pattern 1 begins with (a) infant dedication, followed by (b) Christian nurture and catechetical instruction, leading to (c) baptism upon repentance and the confession of faith including the laying on of hands, and (d) reception into membership and participation in the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist followed by a life of discipleship. Pattern 2 begins with (a) infant baptism, followed by (b) Christian nurture and catechetical instruction, leading to (c) repentance and the confession and confirmation of faith including the laying on of hands, and (d) reception into membership and

participation in the Lord's Supper/Eucharist followed by a life of discipleship. Both patterns include a rich and robust account in which Christian baptism is not reduced to a singular act, but rather traces a journey through which participants are made disciples.<sup>22</sup> Methodists see much value in infant baptism, but can see these two patterns as equivalent routes to the same outcome of making disciples. Baptists can affirm without question that true disciples are made through pattern two above, but regard pattern one to be more faithful to Scripture.

**Pattern 1**

- (a) Infant Dedication
- (b) Christian Nurture and Catechetical Instruction
- (c) Repentance followed by Baptism and Confession of Faith including the Laying on of Hands
- (d) Reception into membership Participation in the Lord's Supper followed by life of Discipleship

**Pattern 2**

- (a) Infant Baptism
- (b) Christian Nurture and Catechetical Instruction
- (c) Repentance and the Confession and Confirmation of Faith including the Laying on of Hands
- (d) Reception into membership Participation in the Lord's Supper followed by life of Discipleship

75. We both recognize that God works through our divergent practices so that true disciples of Jesus are made in both our traditions—and we rejoice in this. Our patterns of initiation differ, and we both believe that our own patterns protect important and precious gospel truths. Yet, in the spirit of receptive ecumenism we also rejoice that we may participate in an exchange of gifts between our churches, recognizing in one another an element of faith and practice which historically we may have lost or rejected, but which would enrich us if reclaimed; and those who have such gifts rejoice to share them. Baptists may receive the Methodist emphasis on prevenient grace, whereas Methodists may receive the Baptist emphasis on the drama of Christian conversion.
76. It should be said that early Methodists resisted the use of the word “confirmation,” partly because of its practice in the Church of England, in Wesley’s Anglican tradition given by episcopal hands; partly because of its possible claim to be a “completion” of baptism, and in response to possible unacceptable views of “baptismal regeneration.” It was re-adopted only in recent times, perhaps due to ecumenical influences. There also remains the confusion over who is confirming what: the real intention is to *confirm to* the person previously baptized the ever-faithful love of God, which is the basis for their continuing faith. Personal commitment is a response to this. But in this dialogue, we have been more concerned to stress the variety of ways in which God’s covenant might be re-affirmed and re-claimed over a lifetime. Baptists welcome infants into the family of faith through a service of infant presentation/dedication. In this rite there are typically three elements: thanksgiving for the life of the child, a commitment on the part of the parents to raise the child in the faith, and a promise given by the church to support the parents in their vocation and to do everything possible to bring the child to a personal confession of faith and to baptism. In ecumenical terms this may be viewed as the beginning of a process of Christian nurture and catechetical instruction.
77. Prior to the act of baptism the journey of becoming a Christian has been enhanced by a period of catechesis. A further time of unfolding the meaning of baptism occurs after the particular event and experience (i.e., the historic practice of *mystagogy*). Baptists and

Methodists carry out the Great Commission to make disciples, baptize, and teach, alongside traditional practices of evangelism. Baptists have classes preparatory to baptism, and Methodists hold “catechumenate or membership” classes in the process of making disciples. Children and their parents are taught the faith in the life of their congregations through preaching and teaching, but also in the experience of a believing community. This catechesis is prior to their baptism at the appropriate time.

78. We note in both our traditions a desire to enhance the drama and symbolism surrounding baptism, for example through the use of salt, light, and oil, which characterized early Christian practice.<sup>23</sup> Other illustrative symbols include the use of a white garment, a baptismal candle (Jn 8:12, Matt. 5:14-16) and the laying on of hands in prayer. For many Christians, anointing with oil “as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and incorporation into the royal priesthood (1 Pet.2:9)” is always associated with the use of water. Churches are also exploring the cultures in which they live, discerning additional elements which express the many dimensions of the process of initiation. The retrieval of a dramatically and symbolically enhanced baptismal practice deserves serious study, since churches throughout the ages have drawn on various biblical images with differing emphases, ignoring some and using others heavily.
79. We share the belief that all aspects of the process of initiation are responsive to the work of God in granting faith and repentance, forgiving sins, bringing new birth, incorporation into Christ, and in giving the gift of the Spirit. As Baptists we confess that we have not always been faithful and effective in making disciples of those whom we baptize, calling us to give greater intentionality to the instruction in holiness. As Methodists we acknowledge that our trust in the lively faith of a congregation, or of parents, has not always been well founded, calling for a renewed commitment to serious teaching in our congregations. As Methodists and Baptists we confirm together that our churches oppose indiscriminate baptism, that is, baptism without Christian nurture and catechesis.
80. Both our churches wish to celebrate the place of testimony within our worshipping and witnessing communities. It is common practice in Baptist churches for the baptismal candidate to provide a testimony to “the experience of grace” prior to or concurrent with the observance of baptism. Testimony remains a practice in Methodist churches today and reaffirmation of baptism and reception into membership (or “confirmation”) have become occasions in which testimony is included. For example, in the British *Methodist Worship Book* there is provision for a baptismal candidate to give personal testimony to God’s grace and also provision for reaffirmation of baptism at an Easter Vigil, as well as a time of testimony in the context of Holy Communion for the day of Pentecost and Times of Renewal in the life of the Church.<sup>24</sup> It is also common in Baptist churches for those present to be exhorted to recall their own baptism at a baptismal service, although a formal reaffirmation of baptism is more rare.

### **Baptism, Discipleship, and Growth in Grace**

81. As Christians baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we confess our union with Christ and with one another in Christ, and we commit ourselves to “building up the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of the faith” (Eph 4:12-13). As Methodists and Baptists we bear witness to the reality that through one Spirit we are baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13). We affirm that in baptism we are as individual Christians united to

Christ (Rom 6:3-4), but through baptism we are also bound together in the whole body of Christ (Eph 5:25-27).

82. We recognize that there are different emphases in talking about what Methodists and Baptists call “means of grace” and “growth in grace,” through preaching and teaching, both pre- and post-baptism. We detect some apparent polarities in the faith of the candidate/faith of the church, human response/God’s action, baptism in water/ baptism in Spirit, and faith/baptism, but we want to affirm that it is a case of both/and rather than either/or in all of these cases. We recognize and affirm the priority of the divine initiative in baptism and the process of Christian initiation.<sup>25</sup> We further recognize and affirm the importance of personal faith as a response to the gospel within the community of the faithful.<sup>26</sup> We also recognize and affirm the importance of the faith that is handed down over time and celebrated in baptism. In the gift of baptism God unites us by the Spirit with the one church of Jesus Christ that transcends geographical, social, racial, and temporal boundaries.<sup>27</sup>
83. As Methodists and Baptists we both affirm that baptism bears witness to regeneration or new birth, but our emphases are different. Baptists see baptism as a witness to and seal of the divine work of regeneration, and so see it as properly following repentance and awakening of faith. As baptism is the rite of entry into the church, this protects the character of the church, which as Baptists understand it is comprised of believers. Methodists are also committed to celebrating the divine work of regeneration, and to regenerate church membership, but they do not see restricting baptism to believers only as the way to protect these gospel truths. Methodists understand baptism to be a sign of God’s grace at work in the life of the child born into the family of faith long before being capable of making a personal response. Baptists are also committed to celebrating God’s grace, but do not see extending baptism to infants as the right way to protect this truth.
84. Our divergent baptismal practices may seem to reflect different understandings of the church, but closer analysis suggests otherwise. Both Methodists and Baptists can confess by faith that the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. And both can affirm that church is visible where the word of God is rightly preached and the sacraments are truly administered according to Christ’s institution.

### **Observations, Reflections, and Challenges**

85. Baptists and Methodists agree that there is no place in their church life for indiscriminate baptism. We both confess our need of greater attention to the intentional practice of making disciples, following the insight of Tertullian that people “are made, not born, Christians.”<sup>28</sup> Credobaptists may allow the practice of baptism to become routinized and marginalized in ways that give the lie to its confessional character and its centrality in the community of faith. Paedobaptists may uncritically submit to what is popular in a passing culture or, in a mistaken view of hospitality, accept requests as a supposed tool for evangelism.<sup>29</sup> The dangers of baptism being adopted as a cultural pattern are obvious.
86. Working together naturally requires that we face our differences. In addressing each other, we need also to recognize the breadth of opinion and practice within, as well as between, our denominations. Baptists are not in agreement among themselves regarding the status of children in the church prior to baptism, nor do they always agree fully on what constitutes a genuine baptism. Methodist opinion reflects ambiguity around these same kinds of questions. Although it is possible to make general statements about Methodist and Baptist

faith and practice, the wide diversity of groups within the Methodist and Baptist families makes it difficult to generalize on many matters. This diversity and tension may be seen in almost all continents and countries. Illustrations from around the world help us to see how doctrine and practice “take on life” in real contexts and real communities of faith.

87. Baptists and Methodists in Asia are drawn together uniquely in fellowship and mission given a common history related to the nineteenth century missionary movement. They share many of the same evangelical theological roots, experiences of revival, and external challenges (e.g., pressure from other religions, ideological political systems, and authoritarian military governments). The Church of North India, a union in 1970 of six churches, including Methodists (former British and Australasian missions) and Baptists (former British), affirms the sacrament of baptism and “recognizes both forms, infant dedication followed by baptism by immersion on profession of faith, and the baptism of infants, followed by confirmation, while insisting that baptism occur only once.”<sup>30</sup> When Baptists and Methodists differ over baptism, in this particular region of the world, it does not affect their fellowship and cooperation in matters of ministry, service, and mutual support.
88. Some churches in European contexts provide similar approaches to baptismal practice. In Great Britain, where there is a long history of Free Church cooperation, there are local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs) in which local congregations affiliate with more than one historic denomination. The Baptist Union of Great Britain allows its ministers to baptize infants if in good conscience they can. The Methodist Church in Britain in LEPs will not permit their ministers to participate in what it perceives to be a “rebaptism.” However, British Methodists have requested liturgies for renewing baptismal vows which may include immersion in water, and have many members who refrain from baptizing their children.<sup>31</sup> The Uniting Church in Sweden, which brings together the Baptist Union of Sweden, United Methodist Church in Sweden, and the Mission Covenant Church, simply affirms “local congregations perform different baptismal practices.”<sup>32</sup> The Uniting Church in Sweden and the worldwide United Methodist Church signed an agreement of full communion in 2015. They agreed to “recognize each other’s baptism and administration of the sacrament of holy communion.”<sup>33</sup>
89. Methodists, Baptists, and Waldensians in Italy established a covenant of federation on the basis of a shared broad Reformation theological foundation, and on the important judgment of the “fruits” of baptism, in which their “different baptismal practice does not prevent full ecclesial communion.” The report states that “Baptist churches (are invited to) accept Methodists and Waldensians as full and equal members, and Waldensian and Methodist churches to accept Baptists as full and equal members, each maintaining their own denominational distinctiveness.”<sup>34</sup> Yet despite these broad agreements the Italian Baptists were still not prepared to accept the baptism of infants as genuine expression of the one baptism into Christ.
90. Changing practices in our two traditions reflect trends that can be discerned in other contexts around the world as well. In Jamaica it is reported that some Methodist parents opt to have a “child blessing” in order that, at a later time, the child can make a commitment for Christ and then be baptized. In cultures that are now post-Christian and have become new mission areas, this tendency to delay baptism is becoming more common. Despite the fact that Methodism has a strong heritage of infant baptism, later baptism may become the

norm given cultural change and new directions in evangelization. In some Baptist churches the age at which children from a Christian background presents a challenge to the conviction of believers' baptism. In most Baptist congregations candidates are typically baptized between twelve and fourteen years of age, but in some congregations in the United States there is a growing trend of baptizing young children, some as early as five years of age. This trend blurs the line between infants and believers, thus challenging the conviction and practice of believers' baptism.

91. Practices within the Wesleyan-Holiness movement denominations (e.g., the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Church, and the Free Methodist Church) present a particularly interesting case from among the member churches of the World Methodist Council. They make provision for both infant baptism and infant dedication. Believers' baptism is widely practiced without a denial of the appropriateness of infant baptism. The "rebaptism" of those already baptized as infants has no official sanction or formal doctrinal support, though it is a quite common practice and would be unlikely to attract much concern from church leaders. There is no insistence on any particular mode of baptism – sprinkling, pouring, and immersion, all being seen as acceptable modes. Generally speaking, the "baptism of the Spirit" understood as a work of sanctification subsequent to conversion is of greater importance than water baptism in these particular churches.
92. Methodists typically receive into church membership (after appropriate conversations and preparation) anyone baptized as an infant or as a believer by any mode, provided the baptism was with water and in the threefold name of the Trinity. While most Baptists around the world still restrict church membership to those who have been baptized by immersion upon the confession of faith, a growing number exhibit a willingness to move beyond a practice of "closed membership" to something more open, which they also consider to be biblically sound. In some contexts, the Baptist community has been led to reexamine the scriptural warrant for membership under the influence of the ecumenical movement and bilateral conversations. The practice of "open membership," which allows for those baptized as infants to be received into membership when their testimony of their prior baptism is accompanied by the confession of faith, is practiced by congregations, especially in the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Burma/Myanmar and Mizoram (India), and in the USA (American Baptists, Cooperative Baptists, National Baptists, etc.).

#### ***Story 4 – Uneasy Time: Period of Isolation for the Baptist converts in Lagos and Ogbomoso in Nigeria (1869-1875)***

Between 1869 and 1875, there was no Southern Baptist missionary on the field because it was difficult for the Foreign Mission Board to send missionaries to Nigeria. It is gratifying to note that from the early 1860s, Rev. J. M. Harden (an African American Baptist minister) and his wife stood in the gap to sustain the Baptist cause. When Rev. Harden died, Mrs. Harden carried on with the work single-handedly but there were many ministerial assignments which she could not perform. During these turbulent times for the Baptists, Rev. Rhodes of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society took Baptist converts to the lagoon and baptised them, making them kneel in the water and dunking their heads three times.<sup>35</sup>

Here we meet to follow thee;  
Trusting in thy great salvation,  
Which alone can make us free.  
Nought have we to claim as merit;  
All the duties we can do  
Can no crown of life inherit:  
All the praise to thee is due.  
Yet we come in Christian duty,  
Down beneath the wave to go;  
the bliss! The heavenly beauty!  
Christ the Lord was buried so.

Anne Steele (1716-1779)

## IV. WORSHIP AND WITNESS

### Worship, Prayer, and Spiritual Formation

93. Baptists and Methodists agree that the assembled worshiping community is the central reality of the church. In Spirit-led worship, the community of faith hears and celebrates what God has done in creation and redemption and offers thanksgiving in response through communal praise and prayer. Baptists and Methodists in their worship attend to Scripture, open themselves to the Spirit, break bread together, and are empowered for witness, service, and participation in the coming of God's reign in the world.
94. Both traditions affirm preaching as a powerful sign of the gospel, which is grounded in God's promise to take human words and transform them into God's own Word (Rom 10:13-17). Methodists and Baptists both authorize and approve ordained and lay persons, both women and men, to preach in public worship. The true worship of God requires the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments or Ordinances, often accompanied by the singing of thanks and praise, and the offering of prayers of confession and intercession, leading to the presentation of worshippers as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1).
95. Baptists and Methodists share a common core of hymnody that can be traced to John and Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, John Newton, evangelical and Gospel songs (Fanny Crosby and Anne Dutton), and hymns from around the globe (Ruben Saillens and Shirley Erena Murray). Hymns and sacred songs function liturgically to confess and catechetically to teach the faith. Baptists and Methodists share a tradition of singing in worship and welcome the recovery of the reading and/or singing of the Psalms. Their emphasis on words sung, prayed, and preached, however, does not displace the role of silence in worship.
96. In their respective traditions both Methodists and Baptists recognize the tension between formal and free worship as well as text-based (e.g., official denominational hymnals and books of worship) and extemporaneous forms of expression. Both Baptist and Methodist worship ranges from liturgical and traditional forms to charismatic and revivalist expressions. Both Methodists and Baptists recognize the need to draw from forms and styles of worship that speak to the broad range of worshippers across generations, genders, and social contexts.
97. Baptists and Methodists share a belief in prayer as one of the "means of grace," whereby the Holy Spirit enables Christians to believe, love, and serve God. Jesus' life of constant prayer and union with the Father serves as a model of Christian prayer for both traditions. When groups gather for prayer meetings they are encouraged to pray for the needs of the whole world in addition to local and community concerns. In their efforts to emphasize mutual accountability, they both share the concern for "watching over one another in love" which integrates Christian discipline and education, spiritual formation and pastoral care. This practice often takes place in small group settings (e.g., the Methodist class system, Baptist Sunday School classes, and fellowship, house, and cell groups). While Baptist communities tend to emphasize the role of the entire congregation in this oversight, Methodists often locate pastoral care, in particular, under the jurisdiction of the local pastor or church council.

## **Sacraments and Ordinances**

98. Regarding the Lord's Supper, Baptists and Methodists both seek to obey the Lord's command to break bread together, to "Do this for the remembrance of me." This command is read by many Baptists as requiring simple obedience and, therefore, described as an "ordinance." Most Methodists, in regularly describing the Supper as a "sacrament," see it as a place where they experience communion with the risen Lord. While these two positions have sometimes been viewed as mutually exclusive, both traditions affirm that the Supper is both instrumental (used by God to establish a new reality) and expressive (manifesting an already-existing reality). Baptists and Methodists regard the rite as one of such solemnity and of promised grace that the difference between "ordinance" and "sacrament" need not be a matter of division.<sup>36</sup>
99. Baptists and Methodists both affirm that this holy meal strengthens and transforms faithful recipients in hope and love, and sends them out into the world bearing Christ's promise of peace, justice and reconciliation. Both agree that the meal is an act of thanks to God for everything God offers in creation and redemption and have come to stress that the Holy Spirit uses the Supper to express and realize the communion of the people of God with Christ and with each other. They view the Lord's Supper as an anticipation of that final feast when God will be all in all.
100. With regard to the question of who may receive the Eucharist, practices vary widely within both the Baptist and Methodist traditions. John Wesley argued that only the repentant and faithful could receive and encouraged the weekly celebration of the sacrament among the Methodists of his time. Later Methodists tended to invite "all who love the Lord" to the table. The Baptist minister John Bunyan argued for the table to be open to all who sought to walk according to the light of God. A strict interpretation of what constitutes the church, however, has often led Baptist congregations to restrict communion to those who have been baptized as believers by immersion. Both Baptists and Methodists affirm that a more regular practice with regard to the Supper may be appropriate today. Even more importantly, perhaps, both traditions have sought to restore Word and Table to a unified observance in some contexts, and even increase the times when congregations may enjoy this promise of Christ's presence.
101. On the most practical level this sacred feast delivers what all meals signify. It is a meal in which God provides what all people need to be healthy and whole. Both traditions affirm that, as participants receive the bread and the cup, they are united with God, with one another, and with the communion of saints. Baptists and Methodists affirm that the Lord's Supper is a visible, effective act instituted by Christ that equips those who receive the sacrament with a variety of gifts for the edification of the Church and its mission in and for the world.

## **Mission and Witness**

102. Baptists and Methodists affirm that God's self-revelation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ summons the faithful to God's mission in the world through the Holy Spirit as a gracious gift and challenging responsibility. Both affirm that the church is a people formed by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to give thanks for what God is doing in the world, witness to it, and participate in it. Both affirm that this mission and witness includes hearing and proclaiming the gospel and encouraging faithful

response to it, baptizing and nurturing new believers; celebrating the Lord's Supper, responding to human need through loving service, caring for God's creation, challenging and seeking to transform unjust structures in society, and working toward peace in all the earth.

103. Both traditions believe that God's mission is most perfectly revealed in the life of Jesus who came "not to be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45) and "to bring good news to the poor . . . proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Lk 4:18-19). Both Baptists and Methodists understand that the goal of the Christian life is love of God and love of neighbor. This twofold love is modelled by and mediated through Christ. Hence they both aspire to live out a life of holiness with each other in the world that God seeks to redeem.
104. Baptists and Methodists believe that faithfulness to God's mission involves seeking to disclose, challenge, and dismantle unjust structures in society. Both affirm that all persons are equally valuable in the sight of God. Methodists and Baptists believe that they are bound, therefore, to work for a world in which every person has the necessities for life with dignity. Both emphasize engaging with social issues through acts of caring for the marginalized (e.g., soup kitchens, visiting shut-ins, prison ministry, health clinics, self-empowerment programs, etc.). Baptists and Methodists have repeatedly renewed their commitment to be faithful witnesses to the gospel message of shalom in their common life and work.
105. Although both Baptists and Methodists were at times unhappily complicit in colonialism, both traditions also share within their missionary histories a focus on empowerment by establishing education institutions, programs of adult education, forming trade unions, facilitating community organizing, etc. This work of social uplift is particularly, but not exclusively, evident in the patterns of ministry in women's unions/prayer groups across the world (e.g., the Baptist Women's Missionary Union in Nigeria and Rukwadzano United Methodist Women in Zimbabwe). In addition, mission activity and churches also established children's homes, homes for the elderly, and provided pastoral response to cultural practices that were seen as dehumanizing (e.g., providing care for abandoned children and former child soldiers).
106. Both traditions share a common history in the beginning and the development of the deaconess movement, which started in Germany and spread to many countries in the world. Initially, in both traditions, women played an integral role in the mission field but, as the mission churches became more established, women were marginalized within the organizational leadership. The deaconess movement arose in part so that women who experienced a particular sense of call to ministry could express their vocation in the years before the ordination of women became accepted.
107. Both traditions in modern times show evidence of having strong lay women's groups that have autonomy in terms of governance, finance, and setting agendas and policies. These groups create awareness and provide tangible models for a pastoral response to issues that do damage to the life of women (e.g., domestic violence and human trafficking) and challenge the policies and practice of the larger denomination in engaging these issues. While the lay women's groups challenge the pastoral response of the each of their

denominations to women's needs, many Baptist and Methodist women point to the need to challenge the unjust systems that lead to the abuse and marginalization of women.

108. In conversation about the witness and mission of Baptists and Methodists in the world today, two particular challenges emerged. Both traditions acknowledge two divergent perspectives with regard to the relationship between evangelism and mission in their respective communities. On the one hand are those who emphasize "saving souls" in the economy of God's mission. On the other hand, there are those who emphasize the church's response to injustice in the world. The challenge, therefore, for both traditions is to seek ways in which they can engage holistically, particularly, with brothers and sisters on the margins. Paradigms exist within both traditions that offer more integral patterns of witness and service as the faithful seek to embrace their vocation in partnership with the mission of God.
109. Both traditions also need to acknowledge and engage concerns related to the created order. The Word of God describes the ways in which God's saving love embraces the entire creation as it longs for fulfillment (Rom 8:19-22) and how the breath of God daily "renew[s] the face of the earth" (Ps 104:30). Both traditions affirm that God's intimate involvement with the earth makes care for the earth an integral dimension of the church's mission. Human devastation of God's earth and its web of life is a sin that demands repentance and conversion. Both of our faith communities have begun to address the destruction of the environment, offering rich theological perspectives, biblical interpretation, and moral teaching.<sup>37</sup>
110. No area of our common faith bears more directly upon life in practical ways than God's mission. Every aspect of this mission—the proclamation of the gospel through word, sacrament, and deed, the ongoing nurture of Jesus' disciples, the service of all in need, the commitment of the community to peace with justice, and the stewardship of our fragile earthly home—is the responsibility of every Christian. Deeply grounded in worship and prayer, mission defines the life of the believer. This mission is both empowered by God's gift of unity within the church and implements and makes visible the church's unity for the world to see and believe. The unity of the church in this common witness, anticipating the final triumph of God's Word in human affairs, emboldens Baptists and Methodists to manifest the life of the gospel in the world and to serve as a prophetic sign of the reign of God. This is what we mean when we speak of faith working through love.

### **Story 5 – *United Theological College of the West Indies***

In February 2017, the dialogue team visited the UTCWI, which is located in Kingston, Jamaica and where members of the clergy are trained. UTCWI stands as a model of collaborative effort among denominations. The institution is an ecumenical project and was established out of the former Union Theological Seminary (Presbyterians and Disciples of Christ), Calabar College (Baptist), St. Peter's College (Anglican), and Caenwood Theological Seminary (Methodist), and made possible by a grant from the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. The UTCWI community comes together, not seeking uniformity, but as expressions of faith and traditions are maintained the community comes in obedience to Jesus' prayer (John 17:21) "that all may be one." It is a melting pot of lecturers and students, who come from different walks of life, and share

common meals, learning, and playing football and cricket; who worship and break bread together and drink from the same cup.

### **Story 6 – *Shared Ministry among the Homeless***

In 2008 Methodists and Baptists in Ashland, Ohio, USA, established a ministry alongside the homeless known as ACCESS. This shared mission, which grew to include other churches as well, provides short term shelter up to thirty days for women and children. Families and single women are accommodated in church buildings and cared for by an army of volunteers. Often members of various congregations assist other smaller churches in this mission. Meals, laundry facilities, clothing, crisis counseling, and support services afford respite for families in duress and lead them to self-sufficiency. This is the first time that these churches have cooperated with each other in a shared mission in the community. The ministry has established deep friendships among those who now understand themselves to be brothers and sisters in Christ.

Who would true valour see,  
Let him come hither;  
One here will constant be,  
Come wind, come weather  
There's no discouragement  
Shall make him once relent  
His first avowed intent  
To be a pilgrim.

John Bunyan (1684)

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heav'n, to earth come down,  
fix in us Thy humble dwelling;  
all Thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, Thou art all compassion;  
pure, unbounded love Thou art;  
visit us with Thy salvation;  
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Charles Wesley (1747)

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Around the world Baptists and Methodists share joint work through theological education, social ministry, youth programs, evangelistic meetings, joint communion services, and they often participate in each other's churches when there is no congregation of their own denomination in the area. Because such widespread shared life already exists, we recommend that at every geographical level from the global to the local congregation, Baptists and Methodists always seek to follow the Lund principle that "to manifest the oneness of the people of God [they should] act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately."<sup>38</sup>
2. We rejoice in the many evidences of shared mission and ministry between Methodists and Baptists which we have discovered during the course of our conversations. We particularly note that around the world pulpit and table fellowship is very often shared without question or reserve by Baptists and Methodists. We delight in this reality and we desire to see it strengthened and spread. We therefore recommend that our churches seek a deeper theological understanding of what is implied by this mutual recognition of one another as sisters and brothers in Christ and our churches as genuine expressions of the one body of Jesus Christ.
3. In the light of the Lund Principle, and having discovered our shared commitment to religious liberty, we recommend that Methodists and Baptists increase their cooperation in advocacy of full freedom of conscience for all people.
4. We found the emerging ecumenical consensus around the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* to be very helpful in our dialogues, and noted that the World Methodist Council has formally adopted it. We recommend that the Baptist World Alliance consider responding appropriately to the *JDDJ*.
5. In a spirit of receptive ecumenism, we recognize that God can speak to us through our deeply held convictions in ways that are transformative and life-giving for churches. We therefore recommend that Methodists and Baptists find ways to express our gratitude for, and to learn from, one another's gifts. We commend the prayer that concludes the report for use by our churches when they gather together.
6. We recognize that baptism unites us, but that our understandings and practices of baptism also separate us. Together we share joy in God's gracious gift of baptism and want all Christians to recognize and delight in this. Therefore we recommend that Baptists and Methodists seek to find even more ways of encouraging their members to remember, reaffirm, and rejoice in their own baptism regularly. We believe that greater attention needs to be given to liturgies emphasizing active remembrance (*anamnesis*) of our own baptism, and providing opportunities for the reaffirmation of baptismal vows.
7. In different ways, both our communions have been too ready to assume that our respective practices of baptism were simply right and beyond criticism. We recommend that Methodists and Baptists attend to recent biblical and historical scholarship on baptism and its practice, and particularly to the way in which it challenges stereotypes and easy assumptions.
8. We recommend that Methodists and Baptists read and study the Bible together in the company of the whole people of God. We especially commend reading Scripture altogether

in home studies, congregational settings, and theological education. We further recommend that the study guide be used for reflection, conversation, and the increase of fellowship.

9. We have found the *BEM* emphasis on Christian initiation as a process to be helpful in pointing a way beyond the long-standing impasse on baptism in our two traditions [BEM B17]. We have also found instructive the WCC report *One Baptism* that examines what it means to see baptism as a process, not the single moment of the water rite [Faith and Order Paper No. 210, Geneva 2011]. Previous Baptist bilateral dialogues with the Anglican World Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have also found this helpful; our present dialogues has provided a unique opportunity for Baptists and Methodists to discuss this together. We have come to appreciate the way this expanded account allows for a wider range of baptismal practices within a common process of Christian initiation. We recommend that Baptists and Methodists consider whether the idea of two patterns in the common process of Christian initiation is helpful in overcoming our differences (par. 74 above).
10. We have come to appreciate the “two patterns” idea about Christian initiation, which has emerged from serious theological reflection on the subjects that still divide us.<sup>39</sup> We also celebrate the united/uniting churches that have sought to implement this understanding in their common life (e.g., the Church of North India). We recommend that Methodists and Baptists reflect on what has been proposed and achieved in this connection at regional and national levels, and the extent to which this might be adapted globally and into other regional and national contexts.
11. Finally, while we have not been able to come to full agreement on all issues in our dialogue, we do not consider points of difference to be insurmountable barriers to unity in mission and witness. We recommend that Methodists and Baptists consider the extent to which they are able to affirm the conclusion of this dialogue that unity in mission and witness is not only desirable, but also possible, for Methodists and Baptists.

## **A PRAYER FOR A “FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE”**

For Methodists and Baptists to Pray Together

### **TOGETHER**

Living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, before you we remember with gratitude the wonderful diversity of the Christian family.

### **BAPTISTS**

Living God, thank you for the Methodists!

Thank you for their vision of spreading scriptural holiness around the world.

Thank you for their rich heritage of hymnody, which has been shared with all.

Thank you for their leadership in the movement for Christian unity in our own day.

### **METHODISTS**

Living God, thank you for the Baptists!

Thank you for their passion for a biblical faith, and for their worldwide mission which has flowed from it.

Thank you for their faithfulness to baptism as an expression of the drama of Christian conversion.

Thank you for their steady commitment to religious freedom for all.

### **BAPTISTS**

Merciful God, we confess our sins as churches.

Forgive us when we have preferred division over unity in mission.

Forgive us when we have acted as rivals to other Christians, (and especially to Methodists) or ignored their existence, or judged their faith, when none of us possesses the whole truth, nor are we the whole church.

### **TOGETHER**

Forgive us, Lord of mercy, when we have not built on the unity you have already given us in Christ Jesus.

### **METHODISTS**

Merciful God, we confess our sins as churches.

Forgive us when we have preferred division over unity in mission.

Forgive us when we have acted as rivals to other Christians, (and especially to Baptists) or ignored their existence, or judged their faith, when none of us possesses the whole truth, nor are we the whole church.

### **TOGETHER**

Forgive us, Lord of mercy, when we have not built on the unity you have already given us in Christ Jesus.

We pray for Christians around the world, with all their many names. We hold before you the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, the Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches, the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, the Indigenous churches and the churches in every place whose names we may not even know.

May your Holy Spirit help us to build on the unity you have already given us in Christ Jesus, and help us to make it more visible.

Watch over the ways in which we witness, teach, and care, in our congregations, institutions, and families, that in all our work we may be faithful and true to the Gospel.  
Help us to love one another, so that the world may believe.  
In all things, may our faith be always active in love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns as one God forever.  
Amen.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, I.C.11-12, Faith and Order Papers No. 210 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2011), 4.

<sup>2</sup> *One Baptism*, II.D.44, 10.

<sup>3</sup> James Leo Garrett, ed. *We Baptists* (Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Grantham, *A Sigh for Peace* (London, 1671), 132-33.

<sup>5</sup> Constitution and Bylaws of the Baptist World Alliance (as amended July 2016).  
<https://www.bwanet.org/about-us2/constitution>.

<sup>6</sup> These numbers reflect the BWA records. There are other Baptist bodies who are not affiliated with the BWA. Other demographers count the global Baptist numbers differently. For example, one recent study counts the total Baptists worldwide to be 58,205,000. Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds. *Atlas of Global Christianity, 1910-2010*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 90.

<sup>7</sup> "The Seoul Covenant," Adopted by the Baptist World Alliance Congress, Seoul, Korea, 1990, *Review and Expositor*, vol. 103 (Fall 2006): 809-10.

<sup>8</sup> Evangelical United Brethren *Confession of Faith*, Confession of Faith,  
<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/confession-of-faith>.

<sup>9</sup> United Methodist Book of Discipline  
<https://www.cokesbury.com/forms/DynamicContent.aspx?id=87&pageid=920#9568>.

<sup>10</sup> "Saved By Grace," <http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Saved-by-Grace.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> "Wesleyan Essentials of the Christian Faith." <http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Wesleyan-Essentials.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1-19.

<sup>13</sup> Larry Kreitzer, *Kissing the Book: The Story of Sam Sharpe as Revealed in the Records of the national Archives at Kew* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2013); Russell, *Samuel Sharpe and the Meaning of Freedom: Reflections on a Baptist National Hero of Jamaica* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2012); and Mary Reckord, "The Jamaica Slave Rebellion of 1831," *Past & Present* vol. 40 no. 3 (1968): 108-25.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Wesley hymn, *Methodist Hymnal* (1738), No. 371.

<sup>15</sup> Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* vol. 20, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 7-18, esp. 11-12. See also Ted A. Campbell, "The 'Wesleyan Quadrilateral': The Story of a Modern Methodist Myth," *Methodist History*, 29:2 (January 1991): 87-95.

<sup>16</sup> *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. William L. Lumpkin, ed. (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1969), 143-71, 235-95, 360-67, 390-400. The BWA Centennial Statement (July 2005),

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<https://www.bwanet.org/about-us2/centennial-statement>. The Baptist confessions cited above are also available online at <http://www.reformedreader.org/ccc/hbd.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> The Deed of Union 1932, <http://www.methodist.org.uk/CLD>; the Evangelical United Brethren its Confession of Faith, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/confession-of-faith>; and *The Book of Discipline*, <https://www.cokesbury.com/forms/DynamicContent.aspx?id=87&pageid=920#9568>

<sup>18</sup> *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 15. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_31101999\\_cath-luth-joint-declaration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html).

<sup>19</sup> J. T. Okedara and Ademola Ajayi, *Thomas Jefferson Bowen; Pioneer Baptist Missionary to Nigeria, 1850-1856* (Ibadan, Nigeria: John Archers, 2004); and S. Ademola Ajayi, *Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-2005, A Comparative History* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Book Wright Publishers, 2010), 154-155. See also Bowen Letter to Brother Taylor (Nov 21, 1851) in *The Bowen Papers: A Compilation of Private and Business Papers of Rev. Thomas Jefferson and Laurena Bowen in Cecil Roberson Collections* (J. C. Pool Library, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso).

<sup>20</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, IV.A.11, Faith and Order Papers No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 4. Hereafter abbreviated *BEM*.

<sup>21</sup> Following the path of *BEM*, the WCC study document *One Baptism* states that baptism “is the central symbolic act *within the whole process of Christian initiation*, the act in which the local church, the body of Christ, gathers to incorporate new members.” *One Baptism*, II.D.44, 10, emphasis added. Baptists and Methodists have both drawn from this stress on baptism within the process of Christian initiation in various bilateral and multilateral dialogues at the regional level. E.g., “Baptist Methodist Agreement on Baptismal Policy Within Local Ecumenical Partnerships,” by the Baptist Union Advisory Committee on Church Relations and the Methodist Church Ecumenical Committee, which was revised in 2009. The Baptist-Catholic international dialogue, affirmed that “initiation into Christ and his church is a process wider than the act of baptism itself.” It continues, “We can work towards a mutual recognition of the different forms that *initiation* takes among us, as an entire ‘journey’ of faith and grace.” “The Word of God in the Life of the Church,” A Report of International Conversations Between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance (2006-2010), 101. Published in the *American Baptist Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2012), and on the Vatican website:

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/Bapstist%20alliance/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20101213\\_report-2006-2010\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/Bapstist%20alliance/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20101213_report-2006-2010_en.html). This emphasis on process was a feature of earlier conversations between Baptists and Anglicans, *Conversations Around the World. Conversations Between the Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance*, 44-51.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Christian Initiation* (London: Lutterworth, 1969), 66; and Curtis W. Freeman, *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists* (Waco, Tx.: Baylor University Press, 2014), 377.

<sup>23</sup> *BEM*, II.2, p. 1; *One Baptism*, II.A.16-25, pp. 5-7 and II.C.32-42, pp. 8-9.

<sup>24</sup> *British Methodist Worship Book*, 65, 279, and 176. See the British Methodist approved service for Reaffirmation of Baptismal Faith, including water.

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2015-15-Reaffirmation-of-Baptismal-Faith.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> *One Baptism*, IV.B.71, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *One Baptism*, IV.A.68, p. 13.

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<sup>27</sup> *One Baptism*, IV.A.70, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Tertullian, *Apology* 18, in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Church* (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 3:32.

<sup>29</sup> *BEM*, IV.C.16, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Into All the World, Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches*, Anglican-Methodist dialogue (2014), 61-62.

<sup>31</sup> See Methodist Church (U.K.) in Max Thurian, ed., *Churches Respond to BEM*, vol. 2 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 4.1.5, p. 221.

<sup>32</sup> “A Theological Foundation for Uniting Church in Sweden,” p. 5. [equмениакыркaн.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/theological\\_foundationUCS.pdf](http://equмениакыркaн.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/theological_foundationUCS.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> “Överenskommelse Verenskommelse Mellan Equмениакыркaн (Uniting Church Sweden) Och Metodistkyrkan (The United Methodist Church) – Agreement of Full Communion Between the Uniting Church in Sweden and the United Methodist Church.” <http://www.ocuir.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Agreement-full-Communion-Between-the-Uniting-Church-in-Sweden-TheUMC.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> “Document on Reciprocal Recognition Among Baptist, Methodist, and Waldensian Churches in Italy,” (1990), 3.10.

<sup>35</sup> S. M. Harden, “A Brief Sketch of the History of the Baptist Mission in Yorubaland,” in S. G. Pinnock, ed., *The Yoruba Baptist Association Year Book for 1915* (Lagos: CMS Press), 42.

<sup>36</sup> “The Church: Toward a Common Vision,” Faith and Order Papers No. 214 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2014), par. 44.

<sup>37</sup> WMC World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and BWA Commission on Creation Care. The WMC call for prayer is a response to Pope Francis, who asked Catholics and others throughout the world to pray for the care of creation, in line with his encyclical *Laudato Si*. <http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/1-september-world-day-of-prayer-for-the-care-of-creation/>. The work of the BWA Commission on Creation Care seeks to provide resources that show “how Christians may live responsibly in the world, relating to the whole of life as part of God’s continuous work of creation, sustenance, and redemption. It deals with issues such as stewardship of the creation, environmental justice, and sustainable development.” <https://www.bwanet.org/freedom-justice>.

<sup>38</sup> Oliver S. Tomkins, ed., *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order*, 15-25 August 1952 (London, SCM, 1953), 16.

<sup>39</sup> “Learning from One Another–Believing Together. “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism” (Eph 4:5), Convergence Document of the Bavarian Lutheran-Baptist Working Group (BALUBAG) (Munich: 2009); <http://www.gftp.de/press/public/weitere/Bavarian%20Baptists%20and%20Lutherans%20Final%20Report.pdf>.