

# THE CONSTITUTION OF THE EUROPEAN METHODIST COUNCIL

## 1. PREAMBLE

1.1. The relationship between the Methodist Churches in Britain and Ireland and the Methodist-Episcopal Church, as it was then known in Continental Europe, has a long history. Contacts in the earlier years of the twentieth century led immediately after the Second World War to the founding of the "Consultative Conference of European Methodist Churches". The Consultative Conference involved all Methodist Churches in Europe and made it possible for representatives to meet regularly and to share information on a European level.

1.2 In 1966 the "Council of the Central Conferences in Europe" of the Methodist Church, soon to become the United Methodist Church, was founded. The goal was to enable close co-operation and co-ordination of the work of the Central Conferences of the Methodist Church. The union of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968 brought into existence the United Methodist Church. The Council was enlarged and adopted the title "European Council of the United Methodist Church". From the beginning of its work the Council invited the Methodist Church in Britain to send an observer to the Council's meeting.

1.3 The great changes which took place in Europe in the 1990s, particularly the development of the European Union and the breakdown of the Communist systems in eastern Europe, increased the necessity for the Methodist Churches in Europe to co-operate and exchange information. In 1993, the "European Methodist Council" was founded with the aim to include all the Methodist Churches in Europe. While the European Council of the United Methodist Church handed over its work to the new Council, the three Central Conferences continued to consult together in matters of common concern through the Joint Commission of the United Methodist Church in Europe. Membership of the European Methodist Council is intended to complement all existing relationships.

1.4 The founding member churches of the European Methodist Council were:

- The European Central Conferences of the United Methodist Church, namely Central and Southern Europe Central Conference, Germany Central Conference and Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference
- The Methodist Church of Great Britain
- The Methodist Church in Ireland
- The Methodist Church in Portugal (Igreja Evangélica Metodista Portuguesa)
- The Opera for the Evangelical Methodist Churches in Italy (Opera per le Chiese Evangeliche Metodiste in Italia, OPCEMI)
- The Spanish Evangelical Church (Iglesia Evangélica Española)

## **2. PURPOSE**

- 2.1 The European Methodist Council exists:
- to enable member churches to consult together on matters of common concern;
  - to enable a stronger Methodist witness in Europe;
  - to enable member churches to share resources with one another, as need may arise;
  - to enable member churches to be more adequately represented in ecumenical and secular bodies;
  - to enable member churches to share with other ecumenical partners in Christian mission in Europe;
  - to co-ordinate existing co-operative Methodist work in Europe;
  - to offer advice to member churches.
- 2.2 In order to fulfil its purpose, the Council in each meeting shall give consideration to its responsibility in the following areas:
- Theology
  - Church and Society
  - Evangelism and Church Development
  - Ecumenism
  - Sharing and networking
  - Other areas that the Council from time to time deems appropriate.
- 2.3 The Council is consultative only, and its decisions shall not be binding on member churches.

## **3. MEMBER CHURCHES**

- 3.1 Membership shall be open to all churches of a Methodist or Wesleyan tradition in Europe, and united churches in Europe that have inherited the Methodist or Wesleyan tradition.
- 3.2 The present member churches of the Council are listed in appendix 1 to the Constitution.

## **4. THE COUNCIL**

- 4.1 The Council shall normally meet once a year.
- 4.2 The Council is constituted as follows:

The Germany and Central and Southern Europe Central Conferences of the United Methodist Church and the Methodist Church of Great Britain: five members each (including the Bishop, President, or some other senior church leader and at least two lay representatives).

The Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference: six members (including two Bishops and at least two lay representatives).

The Methodist Church in Ireland: three members (including the Secretary of Conference and at least one lay representative).

Other churches: two members each (including a senior church leader).

4.3 The Council shall have power to vary the representation of member bodies.

4.4 Each member Church shall be free to determine the length of service of its representatives, in order to secure both continuity and change in the membership of the Council.

4.5 Related organisations (See section 9) and observer churches (See section 10) may participate in the Council.

## **5. WORK AND VOICE OF THE COUNCIL**

5.1 The Council, between its annual meetings, works through its officers, Executive, and committees.

5.2 The Executive and the committees can publish statements and documents adopted by the Council.

5.3 Officers, other members of the Executive, representatives of the committees can, within their area of responsibility, speak to and promote statements and documents adopted by the Council.

5.4 Officers can speak to European Methodists on behalf of the Executive on timely matters not yet addressed by the Council.

## **6. OFFICERS**

6.1 The Officers of the Council shall be: two Co-Chairpersons, a Secretary and a Treasurer, all elected by the Council. It is recommended that they come from different member churches and conferences.

6.2 The Co-Chairpersons shall normally serve for a four-year period, with one being elected every two years. The Co-Chairpersons shall represent different Methodist traditions.

## **7. EXECUTIVE**

7.1 There shall be an Executive, consisting of the Officers and no more than four other persons elected by the Council. It is recommended that they come from different member churches and conferences. Members shall normally serve for a four-year period.

7.2 The Executive normally meets once between the council meetings and may hold its meetings by electronic means.

## **8. COMMITTEES**

8.1 The Fund for Mission in Europe (FMiE) is a standing committee of the council

The responsibility of FMiE is to raise and distribute funds for those churches and conferences in Europe who need help in their mission and social work.

The chairperson of FMiE and up to ten other persons and the manager are elected by the Council, normally for a four-year period.

FMiE reports and is accountable to the Council.

The meeting costs of FMiE are included in the budget of the Council.

8.2 Ad hoc committees and project groups may be established by the Council as needs arise. They report and are accountable to the Council.

## **9. RELATED ORGANISATIONS**

9.1 Related organisations work in consultation with the Council.

9.2 Related organisations are invited to give a report to the Council.

9.3 Related organisations are listed in Appendix 2 of the Constitution. The list includes further provisions if the Council decides to take care of specific expenses linked to the collaboration with related organisations.

## **10. OBSERVERS STATUS OF CHURCHES**

10.1 As a transitional step towards membership, an eligible church (See 3.2) may be granted observer status for a maximum period of three years.

10.2 Observers may participate in the Council with one representative with a voice but no vote.

10.3 Observers do not pay membership fees, but pay both travel and accommodation costs for its representative.

## **11. ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS**

11.1 While the Council does not hold membership in Ecumenical bodies, it co-ordinates the Methodist representation and voice in the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE).

11.2 The Council can initiate or facilitate ecumenical dialogues.

## **12. FINANCE**

12.1 There shall be a common fund for the expenses of the Council to which all member churches will contribute on a basis agreed from time to time.

12.2 The budget of the Council shall include costs for:

- council meetings,
- executive meetings,
- standing committee meetings;
- meetings of ad hoc committees and project groups approved by the Council
- other causes decided by the Council.

12.3 Observers and related organisations pay both travel and accommodation costs, if not otherwise decided by the Council.

12.4 The Council shall elect an auditor who annually gives an auditor's report.

### **13 AMENDMENT**

13.1 The Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a meeting of the Council, provided that it is subsequently ratified by the member churches.

13.2 This Constitution was first adopted 7-8.9.1993, and amended on 16.9.1997 and 16.9.2008. Minor editorial changes were adopted on 15.9.2009. The present constitution was adopted in 2015

Appendix 1: List of member churches and guidelines for composition of the executive

Appendix 2: List of related organizations

#### **Appendix 1: List of member churches**

The Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe, of the United Methodist Church

The Central Conference of Germany, of the United Methodist Church

The Central Conference of Northern Europe and Eurasia; of the United Methodist Church.

The Methodist Church of Great Britain;

The Methodist Church in Ireland;

The Methodist Church in Portugal; (Igreja Evangélica Metodista Portuguesa)

The Opera for the Evangelical Methodist Churches in Italy (Opera per le Chiese Evangeliche Metodiste in Italia, OPCEMI)

The Spanish Evangelical Church (Iglesia Evangélica Española);

The Church of the Nazarene;

The European District of the Korean Methodist Church;

Equmeniakyrkan (Uniting Church in Sweden)

Last amendments 2015. Ratified by all member churches 2016

## **Guidelines for the composition of the executive**

Not counting the secretary in the balance, the executive shall be composed of at least one member each from the Methodist Church of Great Britain, from the Methodist Church in Ireland, from each of the three central conferences of the United Methodist Church, and from one of the autonomous Methodist or Wesleyan member church.

## **Appendix 2: List of related organizations**

European Methodist Youth and Children (EMYC):

EMYC and the Council report to each other, and send a representative to each other's meeting. The sending council pays the travel costs and the hosting council the accommodation costs of the representative. The executives of EMYC and EMC may meet to discuss issues of common interest and coordinate project proposals and other common matters.

European Commission on Mission (ECOM):

If not otherwise represented in the Council, ECOM is welcome to send its chairperson to council meetings with expenses paid by the Council.

European Lay Seminar.

General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church (GBGM), primarily through its Europe Secretary.

Joint Commission of the United Methodist Central Conferences in Europe:

The United Methodist members of the Council may meet in a separate session to deal with matters of common interest.

The Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome (MEOR)

Methodist related Theological Schools in Europe (MTSE)

World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (Europe Continental) and World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (Britain and Ireland).

World Methodist Council (WMC), primarily through its Geneva Secretary.

World Methodist Historical Society – European Section.