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*E Civitate Vaticana, die*

## PRESS RELEASE

### **We Believe in One God: 60 years of Methodists and Catholics walking together**

*“A record of hope and a call to deeper communion”*

‘We believe in One God’ is the title of a new publication by the Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, detailing progress made over the past six decades towards full visible unity between the two Christian world communions.

Printed by Libreria Editrice Vaticana as part of an ecumenical series, the volume draws together the results of 11 reports produced by the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission (MERCIC) since their formal dialogue began back in 1967. These reports, named after the cities in which they were presented to the World Methodist Conference, explore topics such as baptism, holiness, Scripture and tradition, Eucharist, nature and mission of the church and the call to visible communion.

In the preface, the new volume, compiled by the joint commission with the support of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome, defines itself as “both a record of hope and a call to deeper communion.” During the year in which Christians mark the 1,700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea – the first attempt to reach consensus amongst the early Christian communities – the publication is designed as “a gift to all the churches, as they affirm their faith in the Triune God and reflect on the next stages of the quest for Christian unity.”

#### *Fostering mutual respect and trust*

Central to understanding the Methodist-Catholic dialogue is the fact that there is no history of formal separation between these two churches, with Methodism dating its origins as a revival movement within the Church of England in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, as the publication reveals in its nearly 90 pages, “division is real,” requiring “healing of memories, acknowledgment of past wrongs and the retelling of histories to honour victims and foster mutual respect and trust.”

The language of ‘We Believe in One God’ seeks to do exactly that, setting out in a clear and concise way, the many shared convictions, as well as remaining differences of perspective on Trinitarian faith, on the nature and mission of the church, and on the foundations for living a holy Christian life. While not shying away from the difficult questions of doctrine, the sacraments or the structures of authority and decision making, the authors stress that “we have much to learn from each other’s structures of oversight.”

On the central question of the Eucharist, they note that there has been “remarkable convergence,” with Methodists increasingly “recognising that the Lord’s Table belongs to the fulness of Christian worship, while Catholics are appreciating the fundamental importance of preaching the Word.” Significantly, they reaffirm that both Methodists and Catholics “welcome one another to

attend their celebrations of the Eucharist” and although they are not in agreement over admission to Holy Communion, they encourage believers “to make the fullest use of the provisions in their ecumenical legislation.” Regarding some other issues, including the ordination of women, same-sex marriage, contraception and abortion, the authors acknowledge the need for further study.

In recommitting to the dialogue and reaffirming a “confidence in God’s providential leading,” the new publication provides a summary of the fruits of the past sixty years, while offering important signs of hope for the future of the ecumenical journey.

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