

**COVENANT
OF COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATION
BETWEEN THE
WALDENSIAN AND METHODIST CHURCHES**

PREAMBLE

1 - (Methodist recognitions)

The Methodist churches and Conference recognize themselves in the characteristics of the Waldensian movement and churches as attested to by their history and place in Protestant witness in Italy.

2 - (Waldensian recognitions)

The Waldensian churches and Synod recognize themselves in the witness to the gospel given in Italy by the Methodist churches and, with gratitude to the Lord, receive their contribution of experience, thinking and evangelistic commitment.

3 - (Reference to the Rio de la Plata area)

The Methodist Conference and churches, and the Waldensian Synod session and churches in the Italian area, in concluding the process of their integration, hope that a similar development will take place between the Waldensian and Methodist churches in the Rio de la Plata area and submit, in accordance with the common General Discipline, the present integration plan to the Waldensian churches and the Rio de la Plata Synod session for approval.

CHURCH IN GENERAL

4 - (One church body)

The one body living by the Lord's grace alone, formed

- by the churches which, from remote centuries and through numerous persecutions, God in his great mercy has preserved in faith to his Word in certain valleys of the Western Alps, which have taken their name from the Waldensian movement;
- by those churches which have arisen since then for evangelical preaching in various countries where God has led the Waldensian people; and
- by those which professing the same evangelical faith have come and are coming to join them;
- and of which the Methodist churches in Italy now form a part, this too being testimony to the will of the Lord who has used them for more than a century for the proclamation of his gospel among the people of Italy, for the purpose of relations with other churches, religious denominations and the state shall take the name "Waldensian Evangelical Church", specifying that this name designates the "Union of Methodist and Waldensian Churches".

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

5 - (Confession of Faith)

The Church's Confession of Faith cannot be considered statically in that whenever the Waldensian and Methodist churches have taken a position consistent with the word of God and have been faithful witnesses to their Lord and his gospel, they have confessed their faith. However, since historical confessions of faith have their own value and significance we agree that the

confession of the Reformed Churches of Piedmont, known as the Waldensian Confession of Faith of 1655, shall be the historical confession of faith of the integration of the Waldensian and Methodist Churches, regarding also as historical documents, in line with the Confession of Faith of 1655, the Declaratory Act of the Waldensian Synod of 1894 and the Doctrinal Lineaments contained in the Act of Autonomy of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Italy [of 1962].

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

6 - (*Shared General Discipline*)

As a shared General Order for the integration of Waldensian and Methodist churches in the Italian area, we recognize the provisions contained in DV/1974, which allow the Methodist rules to continue to exist and evolve as their own, autonomous regulation within the Waldensian order with regard to the local Methodist churches and their typical connection constituted by the circuit, as well as for their inclusion in district structures and synod.

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

7 - (*Ecclesiastical regulation*)

All ecclesiastical regulation in the Italian area shall be enacted jointly at the synod session in which the Methodist churches are integrated.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

8 - (*Ecumenical relations*)

For all purposes of ecumenical relations and representation, the Methodist churches in Italy shall continue to act and be represented directly by their own special body called Agency for the Evangelical Methodist Churches in Italy ("Opera per le chiese evangeliche metodiste in Italia" - OPCEMI).

Likewise, the Executive Board ("Tavola") shall continue to take care of the ecumenical relations and representations of the Waldensian churches.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

9 - (*Baptism and the Lord's Supper*)

In the spirit and on the basis of the mutually recognized communion of faith, we acknowledge the conformity to the gospel of baptism and the Lord's Supper respectively administered in the Methodist and Waldensian Churches according to their liturgies.

PEOPLE

10 - (*Church members: identity*)

All church members enrolled in the respective registers as Waldensians or Methodists shall retain their denominational identity without this affecting their spiritual prerogatives and ecclesiastical rights, including that of acceding to any office or being elected to any function either at the local level according to the respective rules for the local churches to which they belong, or at other territorial levels according to the shared disciplines.

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

11 - (*Church members: transfers*)

Full application is given to articles 1 and 2 of the church membership regulations approved by article H of the joint session of Synod and Conference in 1969.

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

MINISTRIES

12 - (*Single pastoral roll*)

As a result of and in accordance with the recognition of their respective pastoral ministries that took place with article 10 of the Waldensian Synod of 1957 and with the decision of the Methodist Conference of 1958, all pastors and evangelists in service activities in Waldensian or Methodist churches or institutions, or when retired, shall go onto a single roll, divided into the current categories. This roll shall be kept by the Executive Board on behalf of the integrated pastoral body.

The unification of the roll gives ministers the same legal status and is not contingent on any economic issue.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

13 - (*Provision of churches*)

The assignment and appointment of pastors to individual local churches shall be made by the Executive Board on the basis of the availability of those on the roll and within the limits of the competencies assigned to it by the ecclesiastical disciplines. The council of the circuit concerned will be consulted before pastors are assigned to Methodist circuits.

The Committee has already prepared and is submitting the text of the rules regarding the provision of Methodist churches.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

14 - (*Access to the pastorate*)

The joint regulations concerning preparation for the pastorate, recognition of vocation, consecration and employment will be prepared by the Committee on Disciplines on the basis of the existing regulations and experience in the Waldensian and Methodist Churches, and the guidelines which the Waldensian Synod and the Methodist Conference will adopt when meeting in joint session in 1976, so that they can be approved and put into effect by 1 September 1977.

15 - (*Evangelists*)

The common regulations concerning the preparation, recognition of vocation, consecration and employment of evangelists will be prepared by the Committee on Disciplines on the basis of the existing regulations and experience in the Waldensian and Methodist churches, and the guidelines which the Waldensian Synod and the Methodist Conference will adopt when meeting in joint session in 1976, so that they can be approved and put into effect by 1 September 1977.

16 - (*Transition from evangelists to pastors*)

Regulations regarding the transition from evangelist to pastor will be prepared by the Committee on Disciplines on the basis of the respective existing Waldensian and Methodist regulations, and the guidelines that the Waldensian Synod and the Methodist Conference will adopt when meeting in joint session in 1976, so that they can be approved and put into effect by 1 September 1977.

The Committee has already prepared and submitted the text of transitional regulations.

17 - (*Pastoral body*)

In accordance with the prior mutual recognition of their respective pastoral ministries, all Waldensian and Methodist pastors and evangelists including those referred to in article 7 of the Covenant of Cooperation of 4 October 1962, each within the framework of their respective competencies, namely, pastors with the right to vote and evangelists with the right to speak, shall form a single pastoral body in accordance with and to the effect of article 16 of DV/1974, convened and presided over by the moderator.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

In the meantime, an amendment to article 16 of DV/1974 would be necessary in order to put the position of evangelists on an equal footing with that of pastors in the pastoral body.

18 - (*Convening joint pastoral meetings*)

In accordance with the prior mutual recognition of their respective pastoral ministries, all Waldensian and Methodist pastors and evangelists, each within the framework of their respective competencies under their current ecclesiastical disciplines, shall be convened in joint session in all circumstances and when required by the moderator of the Waldensian Executive Board and the president of the Methodist Conference as of 30 August 1974.

19 - (*Consecration to ministry*)

The joint regulation on ministries will specify that new pastors and evangelists from local Waldensian and Methodist churches are required to sign the 1655 Confession of Faith as a personal commitment at their consecration.

This article shall take effect no later than in 1977.

20 - (*Local pastors*)

In accordance with the fact that the local pastorate has been jointly recognized, the Committee on Disciplines specifies that, in the regulations on ministries it is to prepare for approval by 1 September 1977, the current Methodist rules on the local pastorate will be accepted with appropriate adaptations.

21 - (*Standing Committee on Studies*)

The Standing Committee on Studies continues to take care of the tasks presently provided for in the second paragraph of article 87 of the 1967 Methodist rules relating to the preparation of candidates for the ministry of evangelist and local preacher, organizing special courses for them and exercising the functions of an examining board. It shall be composed and appointed in accordance with the provisions of the special regulations on ministries to be prepared by the Committee on Disciplines following the guidelines that the Waldensian Synod and the Methodist Conference are to adopt when meeting in joint session in 1976, and also taking into account the respective current ecclesiastical regulations, so that it may take effect no later than 1 September 1977.

22 - (*Local preachers*)

In an effort to enhance the contribution of lay people in the local churches, the local preachers' roll currently existing in the Methodist churches shall be maintained and opened to those Waldensians who wish to participate. The relevant shared regulations will be prepared by the Committee on Disciplines on

the basis of the current Methodist rules, appropriately adapted, so that they can be approved and go into effect by 1 September 1977.

LOCAL CHURCHES.

23 - (*Character of local churches*)

The individual Methodist local churches, as primary ecclesiological elements equal to the Waldensian churches, shall retain their original name, their own constituent characteristics, and their specific current sets of regulations.

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

24 - (*Discipline of local churches*)

The current Methodist rules concerning local churches will take the form of autonomous regulations within the framework of Waldensian church disciplines. They will include a provision whereby the said regulations cannot be amended by synod unless this is proposed by at least five local Methodist churches.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

The Committee will submit the revised wording of the current Methodist rules to connect them to the Waldensian regulations by 1 August 1975.

25 - (*Territorial areas*)

The circuit councils and district committees, in joint meetings, will prepare a comprehensive geographic plan of the territorial areas of each local church under their jurisdiction (autonomous, established, churches in formation, Methodist congregations) by 1 August 1975, also taking into account the ongoing situations and diasporas looked after by individual churches.

The committee will coordinate the various local projects and present them to the 1976 joint session for approval and implementation.

26 - (*Newly formed churches*)

Each newly formed local church will decide by a vote of its general meeting, following recognition by the District Conference, which of the two sets of regulations on local churches it would like to adopt.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September.

27 - (*Merger or union of local churches*)

The local Waldensian and Methodist churches now existing in the territory of the same municipality shall not merge or unite except by common local initiative, without any pressure or invitation from the central or peripheral governing bodies. Every merger and union shall be implemented on the basis of a special agreement approved by the Executive Board (and, until comprehensive integration is implemented, by the Executive Board and the Standing Committee jointly), which, among other things, shall specify which set of regulations on local churches (Waldensian or Methodist) the church concerned wishes to adopt, unless the local situation requires different regulations to be approved by synod in the context of a disciplinary amendment.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1975.

REGIONAL BODIES

28 - (*Circuits - presbyteries*)

As territorial structures for carrying out liaison between the local churches with respect to pastoral care and evangelism, the circuits shall remain as configured in the Methodist Regulations (Meth. Reg. 1967, title II, articles 34 to 46). Their number will be reviewed so as to allow for the integration of Waldensian churches falling within their respective territorial boundaries. These circuits will come to absorb the functions currently performed by the presbyteries established among the Waldensian churches in certain regions.

The Committee will submit the planned adaptation of the current Methodist Regulations to the above requirements and the planned area of each circuit by 1 August 1975.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1976.

29 - (*Districts and conferences*)

The organization of the lower number of Waldensian districts shall be maintained on the basis of District Conferences and their respective Executive Committees, also in order to implement title III of the 1967 Methodist regulations on the establishment of districts and to prepare for the implementation of chapter V of DV/1974. The district structure particularly takes care of administrative and organizational matters relating to the work of the local churches and institutions existing in the district. Direct participation by representatives of all local Waldensian and Methodist churches and groups in the respective territorial area shall be ensured in the district conferences.

The Committee will submit the planned restructuring of territorial districts and the draft adaptation of the present Waldensian regulations on districts to the above requirements by 1 August 1975.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1976.

SYNOD

30 - (*One synodal assembly*)

The synod, as defined in articles 27, 28, 29 and 30 of DV/1974, constitutes the assembly in which the individual Methodist and Waldensian local churches shall manifest their unity of faith and disciplines after achieving integration. In the said synodal assembly the Waldensian representation will be reduced in accordance with the Waldensian Regulations as set out in the RG and RZ, while the likewise reduced Methodist representation will be composed in accordance with the appropriately adapted Methodist Regulations (Meth. Reg. 1967, transitional rules II, paragraphs a, b).

The numerical reductions in the two representations will be proportional to the respective sizes of the current assemblies.

The Committee will submit the provisions adapting current Methodist and Waldensian Regulations to the above requirements by 1 August 1975.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

31 - (*Scrutiny Committee for OPCEMI*)

The Methodist standing committees on buildings and auditing shall merge their functions to become – with 4 members, 2 pastors and 2 lay people – the scrutiny committee on the work of the Agency for Evangelical Methodist Churches in Italy (OPCEMI). The [European] area synod regulations will be adapted to the above.

The Committee will submit said provisions by 1 August 1975.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

32 - (*Committee on Disciplines*)

The Methodist Standing Committee on Disciplines shall merge with the Waldensian Committee on Regulations, which will take the former's name while retaining its own regulations.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

33 - (*Committee on Disciplines: transitional provision*)

The Waldensian Committee on Regulations shall be supplemented by a member of the Methodist Committee on Disciplines; the Methodist Committee on Disciplines shall be supplemented by a member of the Waldensian Committee on Regulations by 1 September 1974. The Board and the Standing Committee respectively shall designate the above persons.

SECTORAL BODIES

34 - (*Sunday Schools*)

The Methodist Sunday School Secretariat and the Waldensian Sunday School Committee shall merge according to decisions already taken.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1975.

35 - (*Local Preachers' Union*)

The present union becomes a sectoral body under article 31 of DV/1974. The union will represent local Waldensian and Methodist preachers.

The Committee will present rules to include representation from the union in synod and in district conferences.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1976.

36 - (*Women's organizations*)

Leaving the current Waldensian and Methodist women's organizations free to merge where they see fit, the committee will present rules regarding their representation in regional and synodal assemblies by 1 August 1978.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

37 - (*FGEI – Italian Protestant Youth Federation*)

Regarding the youth organization, the Committee will harmonize the decisions already taken by the Waldensian Synod (9/SI/1969 and 28/SI/1970) and the Methodist Conference (article 21/1971; article 20, 22/1972; articles 19, 42/1973) regarding the FGEI, by 1 August 1975.

ADMINISTRATION

38 - (*Waldensian Executive Board (Tavola)*)

The Waldensian Executive Board, as defined in articles 32, 33, 37 of DV/1974 and by its by-laws, as the executive body of synod shall fulfill toward the Methodist churches the functions currently performed by the Standing

Committee, excluding matters concerning ecumenical representation of the Methodist churches, relations with world Methodism, and the ordinary and extraordinary administration of the property of the Methodist churches registered with the CEMI nonprofit organization before and after its planned transformation. Methodist representation is guaranteed on the Executive Board.

The Committee will submit new provisions on the composition of the Board by 1 August 1975. This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979. The Executive Board and Standing Committee shall convene jointly at each of their sessions.

39 - (*Methodist Agency*)

The Standing Committee shall assume the capacity and name of a synodal administrative committee in accordance with article 35 of DV/1974 and, under the terms of its own bylaws, take care of the ordinary and extraordinary administration of the movable and immovable property in the name of the CEMI (Methodist Church in Italy) nonprofit organization before and after its planned transformation. It will also take care of the representation in, and relations with the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches in the interests of the local Methodist churches, and with the Methodist World Council and the Methodist Conference of Great Britain as specified in the Covenant of Cooperation and the Act of Autonomy of 4 October 1962. In accordance with article 7 of the Covenant of Cooperation it will exercise jurisdiction over ministers seconded by the Conference of Great Britain to serve in Italy.

The current CEMI statute will be appropriately transformed in the above sense, and the entity will take the name "Opera per le chiese evangeliche metodiste in Italia" (OPCEMI), a nonprofit entity. Pursuant to article 37 of DV/1974, a member of the Executive Board will be a full member of the OPCEMI committee, thereby exercising duties of oversight. The executive body of OPCEMI has been named the "Standing Committee".

Electing the committee is the responsibility of synod. Its members shall be chosen from among the Methodists, they will be members of synod and proportionate in number to the size of the Methodist representation.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979. The Committee shall submit the draft reform of the CEMI statute and the regulatory provisions needed to include OPCEMI in the implementing regulations for chapter VIII of the General Discipline by 1 August 1975.

40 - (*Sources of revenue*)

The OPCEMI committee has the right to request contributions for its institutional purposes from local Methodist churches, as well as from Methodist churches outside Italy and from ecumenical interchurch aid bodies.

The committee shall, in particular, continue to collect the contributions for the Ministry Fund and the Pension Fund from the local Methodist churches, as in the past; it shall also make regular contributions to the Executive Board, according to an agreed annual plan, to cover the charges arising from the enrolment on the joint roll of Methodist pastors and evangelists in active service and retirement, and their widows, in relation to the number of Methodist churches the Executive Board will have to provide for.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

The committee will present the schedule of payments and the contributions received, as well as the provisions to be included in the implementing regulations for chapter III of DV/1974, by 1 August 1977.

41 - (*Head office and administrative offices*)

The head office of the Waldensian Board is confirmed as being in Torre Pellice; that of OPCEMI is fixed in Rome. The offices of the two bodies will be located in the Waldensian House in Torre Pellice during the summer and the rest of the year in Rome in the building in Via Firenze. The use of the relevant premises is free of charge.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

42 - (*Faculty of Theology*)

There will be at least one Methodist member on the Council of the Faculty of Theology, which is the synod administrative committee, chaired by the moderator and accountable to synod for the progress and administration of the Faculty.

The presidency of the Faculty Council has been entrusted to the dean; the moderator may be the delegate representing the Executive Board.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1975.

The committee will present provisions for the integration of the new Faculty Regulations by 1 August 1975.

43 - (*Newspaper*)

It is confirmed that the official periodical of the newly integrated Waldensian-Methodist church shall be called "La Luce" (The Light) with the subtitle "Weekly of the Waldensian and Methodist Evangelical Churches". This periodical will have an edition entitled "Eco delle Valli valdesi" (Echo of the Waldensian Valleys), without prejudice to the aforementioned subtitle and content.

Methodist participation is ensured on the editorial committee. The newspaper remains the property of the Waldensian Executive Board, which shall appoint the editor in consultation with the Standing Committee of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Italy, as long as this nonprofit entity exists. By decision of the Executive Board and the Standing Committee, the present article shall take effect on 1 January 1975.

44 - (*Claudiana*)

It is confirmed that Methodist representation will be ensured on the finance committee and the editorial committee of the Claudiana publishing house.

Commissions have been changed into committees.

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

45 - (*Ecumene*)

The Ecumene complex shall take the form of an autonomous institution within the meaning of Waldensian disciplines, on a par with others now in existence in the sense that it shall have synodal regulations and report to synod for its management. Ecumene shall be managed by a committee elected under its bylaws and administered by a director and deputy director appointed by the Executive Board.

The Ecumene property complex will be donated to CEMI with the restrictions on its use imposed by its current owner.

The Committee will submit the draft statute for Ecumene by 1 August 1977.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

46 - (*Other Methodist social welfare agencies*)

Methodist social welfare agencies such as the Villa San Sebastiano social center and the Rapolla social center are entities that fall under the management of the respective local Methodist church, retaining the right to receive a fixed annual contribution from the OPCEMI committee.

The social centers of San Marzano and Scicli fall under the management of the respective local Methodist church.

The committees of the aforementioned social centers shall conduct their operations under the oversight of the respective district conference to which they are accountable. The Scicli and Rapolla centers remain within the framework of their respective local churches and therefore their operations are under the oversight of the district bodies in agreement with those of the respective churches that run them.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1978.

47 - (*Casa Materna*)

The Casa Materna children's home and its relevant branches, if they so desire, can be accommodated in the context of Waldensian-Methodist integration by taking the form of an autonomous institution, like Ecumene.

48 - (*Committee on diakonia*)

The Methodist Committee on Diakonia, which has the task of stimulating and coordinating the action of local churches in the field of social service, shall become a committee appointed by the Executive Board that merges with the existing Waldensian "Diaconal Center".

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

49 - (*Ministerial stipends*)

The relationship between the ministers and the administration is not one of employment, but the former devote themselves to serving the church, and the latter commits itself to providing for their livelihoods.

In connection with the special role of ministers, their legal status is also unified. The stipend, according to a plan to be prepared by the committee and the two administrations concerned, will equalize over time at the highest level among those in place.

The committee will also submit the appropriate provisions regarding legal status to be included in the shared regulations by 1 August 1976.

50 - (*Employee salaries*)

Staff employed by the Executive Board and the Standing Committee who are not on the pastoral roll shall also be retained in service, if they so desire, after this comprehensive integration project enters into force.

Each administration will only hire any new staff with the consent of the other and with mutual agreement on the terms and salary.

This article shall take effect on 1 September 1975.

DISCIPLINE AND WORSHIP

51 - (*Disciplinary rules*)

Order within integrated churches shall be exercised in accordance with the principles contained in articles 39, 40, 41 and 42 of DV/1974; for implementation, see the specific rules of the Waldensian and Methodist Regulations.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

52 - (*Use of names*)

The separate or paired names "Waldensian" and "Methodist", and the Waldensian emblem, may be used by entities or individuals only by explicit permission of synod.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1979.

53 - (*Liturgy and catechism*)

The relevant Waldensian and Methodist church bodies shall appoint any committees for liturgy or catechism jointly and with mixed composition.

This article shall take effect no later than 1 September 1975.

FINAL PROVISIONS

54 - (*Double vote*)

This Covenant of Comprehensive Integration is understood to be operative in each and every one of its individual provisions, insofar as it is approved in each and every part and as a whole by the double affirmative vote of the Waldensian Synod and the double vote of the Methodist Conference. And this is regardless of the time scale established in said Covenant for the phased application of the individual articles.

55 - (*Date of application*)

This Covenant also contains provisions (18, 33) that will be applied earlier, as they set forth resolutions and decisions already made jointly by Synod and Conference or the Executive Board and the Standing Committee. Others will take effect the moment the Covenant of Integration receives its final approval (4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 23, 27, 34, 37, 42, 43, 44, 50, 53).

56 - (*Responsibility for drafting implementing provisions*)

The Committee on Disciplines is tasked with drafting provisions related to articles 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 32.

The Covenant's editorial committee is tasked with drafting the provisions related to articles 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 45, 49.

57 - (*Committee on integration*)

The committee referred to in article M of the 1972 joint session proceedings is to be reappointed by the Standing Committee and the Executive Board and its terms of reference are hereby confirmed. The committee is tasked with working to facilitate the phased and timely implementation of this Covenant.

58 - (*Communication to the British Methodist Conference*)

The Standing Committee will notify the Conference of the Methodist Church of Great Britain of this Covenant.

Approved on 27 August 1975 and operational from 1979