

*The Development of Receptive Ecclesiological Thinking and Vision of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis*

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This jointly authored paper examines the development of receptive ecclesiological thinking and vision of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis. Firstly, we turn to *Ut Unum Sint*. Here the possibility of a differentiated Methodist reception of the petrine ministry in the light of the suggestions for dialogue on petrine ministry are placed in the context of the ongoing international Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue and the particular impact of the present pontificate. The development of the concept of *consonance* developed in Irish Anglican-Methodist dialogue on episcopal ministry and presbyteral interchange is invoked. It is argued that a reception of the petrine ministry is consonant with the Methodist understanding of connexionalism and its implications in a globalising world.

We then turn to Benedict XVI. Benedict's ecclesiology was originally shaped by his 1954 doctoral thesis *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*. Here he began to develop a fully Christocentric understanding of Church as People of God once and for all redeemed in balance with a view of Church as Pilgrim People moving towards fulfillment. As such he incorporated strands of post-Reformation thinking into a fully Catholic vision of Church as Pilgrim People.

Finally, Francis' understanding of synodality resonates with Methodist understanding of church as connexion and communion. His all round approach to ecumenism, constantly seeking to affirm the gifts of all other Christian communities, whether seen as churches or ecclesial communities, resonates with the Methodist understanding of the 'catholic spirit'. This is part of an overall vision of Church as constantly reforming also shaped by the identification of Church with mission and by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. This allows him to develop a vision of Church gathered into the centre but focussed on the peripheries where the Church is the field hospital of the world.