

Unity, Faith and Order: Report to ACC 17

1. Introduction

The significant Anglican commitment to the unity of the Church, together with the intra-Anglican conversations about life in communion, flow from the same source: the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ that his disciples may be one, so that the world may believe (John 17.21). The Anglican Communion's commitment to Christian unity is expressed in the "Four Principles of Anglican Engagement in Ecumenism" adopted by ACC 14 (2009):

1. *The Goal*: the full organic unity of the Church
2. *The Task*: recognising and receiving the Church in one another
3. *The Process*: unity by stages
4. *The Content*: common faith, sacraments and ministry

The Unity, Faith and Order work of the Anglican Communion addresses both the intra-Anglican agenda and wider ecumenical agenda around the unity of the Church.

As Anglicans reflect on the gift of the communion that we share, as well as the present challenges to our Communion, the lively theological resources from our ecumenical dialogues with other global churches are at hand.

2. Global Christianity from ACC 16 to ACC 17

Intra-Anglican and ecumenical relationships evolve in specific contexts. The period between ACC 16 in 2015 and ACC 17 this year has seen significant advances.

- In the summer of 2016, the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Churches took place in Crete, a gathering that had been in preparation for over a century. Representatives of most Orthodox Churches, but not all, attended this first major global meeting in modern times to consider questions about the mission of the Orthodox Church in today's world, and the relationship between the Orthodox Church and other churches.
- 2016 marked the 50th anniversary of the visit of Archbishop Michael Ramsay to Pope Paul VI in Rome, the creation of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), and the Anglican Centre in Rome. As part of the celebrations in Rome in October 2016, Archbishop Justin and Pope Francis met, prayed together, and issued a [Common Declaration](#).
- 2017 marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The commemoration began on 31 October 2016 in Lund, Sweden, in the presence of Pope Francis, the leadership of the Lutheran World Federation, and a wide ecumenical representation. It concluded at Westminster Abbey on 31 October 2017, at a celebration led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Anglican Consultative Council's 2016 Resolution affirming the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was presented to the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, in the presence of the general secretaries of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Methodist World Council, who have also adhered to the Joint Declaration.

- The Fourth International Receptive Ecumenism Conference took place in Canberra, Australia in November 2017. With its guiding principle, “What, in any given situation, can one’s own tradition appropriately learn with integrity from other traditions?” Receptive Ecumenism is changing how churches grow closer to one another by learning from one another, locally and globally.
- The Third Global Gathering of the Global Christian Forum took place in Bogota, Columbia in April 2018. It brought together for prayer and faith-sharing diverse groups of Christian leaders from the historic ecumenical families of churches with the newer evangelical and charismatic churches.
- 2018, marked the 70th anniversary of World Council of Churches. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Ecumenical Patriarch, and Pope Francis highlighted the anniversary in significant ways. Most Anglican provincial churches are member churches of the WCC.
- The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, sponsored by the World Council of Churches, took place in Arusha, Tanzania, March 2018. The theme was “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship”.

3. Ecumenical Dialogues of the Anglican Communion from ACC-16 to ACC-17

The Anglican Communion’s bilateral dialogues work carefully to propose to the churches new ways toward that unity for which Christ prayed. Some dialogues seek to resolve historic and more recent theological and ethical issues that divide the churches. Other dialogues seek the unity of the Church through shared mission.

a. *Theological dialogues*

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III) The third phase of ARCIC began in 2009 with the mandate to promote the reception of the work of ARCIC II, to reflect on the church as Communion, local and universal, and to reflect together how in communion the local and universal Church come to discern right ethical teaching. The work of ARCIC II was completed in the autumn of 2016, and presented to the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury. ARCIC III completed its first agreed statement in 2017, [*Walking Together on the Way: Learning to be the Church—Local, Regional and Universal*](#). The text was published in the autumn of 2018 and has already attracted considerable attention, not least because its use of the methodology of Receptive Ecumenism.

- ACC 17 will be asked to welcome *Walking Together on the Way*, and to commend the text to the churches of the Anglican Communion for study and response.

ARCIC III’s agenda has now shifted to a reflection on ethical issues, and how Anglicans and Roman Catholics discern ethical teaching.

Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission (AOOIC) In 2017 the AOOIC completed the agreed statement on [*The Procession and Work of the Holy Spirit*](#).

- ACC 17 will be asked to welcome this text and commend it to the churches of the Anglican Communion for study and response.

Since 2017, the AOOIC has been studying the nature of authority in the Church, with particular emphasis on the roles of bishops, councils and the authority of the historic ecumenical councils.

International Anglican-Reformed Dialogue (IRAD) The focus of the dialogue continues on the nature of communion as understood and lived out in both within the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Anglican Communion. The dialogue expects to finish its agreed statement in 2019. While acknowledging the theological significance of communion, IRAD will highlight its practical consequences.

International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD)

The Commission has met yearly since the last ACC. The period since the meeting of ACC has seen a welcome reception of the 2015 agreed statement *In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope Filled Anthropology*. From 2016 the Commission shifted its focus to the discussion of ethical issues, examining environmental ethics and questions about the ending of life.

b. Unity and Mission dialogues

International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) is an episcopal commission of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops across the globe who promote the reception of the work of ARCIC and who promote joint work in mission between the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. In October 2016 the IARCCUM bishops met in Canterbury and Rome, where they were commissioned by the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury for the work of common mission and unity together across the Church.

Anglican-Lutheran International Co-ordinating Committee (ALICC). Established to monitor, coordinate and promote relationships between Anglicans and Lutherans around the world, ALICC concluded its mandate after ACC 16. On ALICC's recommendation, the Anglican Communion and the Lutheran World Federation agreed to a revised body, the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission on Unity and Mission (ALICUM). The new body will be a dispersed global commission of Anglican and Lutheran bishops who will engage each other in mission, and deepen the bonds of unity. Further planning is anticipated later this year and in 2020. ALICUM will formally begin after the Lambeth Conference.

Anglican-Old Catholic International Co-ordinating Council (AOCICC) While not an ecumenical dialogue, as it oversees an existing relationship of full communion, the AOCICC explores the nature and meaning of this communion, and coordinates mission between the two families of churches in Europe. In 2017 the results of a survey from five European contexts was received. The results reflect a high level of awareness of the relationship of full communion between Anglicans and Old Catholics, and illustrate the varied ways in which the churches are engaging with each other in mission, especially in areas where congregations from both churches are present in the same place. In 2019 the AOCICC completed its mandate, and offers its report, [Anglicans and Old Catholics serving in Europe](#), to ACC 17 and the Old Catholic International Bishops' Conference.

- ACC17 will be asked to welcome this text and commend it to the churches of the Anglican Communion for study and response.
- ACC 17 will be asked to renew the mandate of the AOCICC.

4. Inter-Anglican Standing Committee on Unity Faith and Order

The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity Faith and Order (IASCUFO) is a unique forum that harvests the riches of intra-Anglican and ecumenical dialogue, and places them in dialogue with one another.

The Commission brings together work done previously by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (IASCER), and the Windsor Continuation Group. The Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion established IASCUFO in November 2008, with the following mandate:

- To promote the deepening of Communion between the Churches of the Anglican Communion, and between those Churches and the other churches and traditions of the Christian *oikumene*
- To advise the provinces and the Instruments of Communion on all questions of ecumenical engagement, proposals for national, regional or international ecumenical agreement or schemes of cooperation and unity, as well as on questions touching Anglican Faith and Order
- To review developments in the areas of faith, order or unity in the Anglican Communion and among ecumenical partners, and to give advice to the Churches of the Anglican Communion or to the Instruments of Communion upon them, with the intention to promote common understanding, consistency, and convergence both in Anglican Communion affairs, and in ecumenical engagement.
- To assist any Province with the assessment of new proposals in the areas of Unity, Faith and Order as requested.

IASCUFO has met yearly to reflect on life in the Anglican Communion. It advises the Instruments of Communion, and advises the provincial churches on their ecumenical relationships. IASCUFO published its papers from ACC 16 title [Communion in Ministry and Mission](#).

- ACC 17 will be asked to affirm IASCUFO's proposal to revise the process by which the Anglican Communion receives the agreed statements from its bilateral dialogues.