

Section B : Fundamental Principles

43. The mandate of this Commission has been to examine, and make recommendations in relation to, the formal results, in terms of our Communion one with another within Anglicanism, of the recent events which have been described. *We repeat that we have not been invited, and are not intending, to comment or make recommendations on the theological and ethical matters concerning the practice of same sex relations and the blessing or ordination or consecration of those who engage in them.* Having outlined the problems, and sketched the deeper symptoms we believe to lie beneath them, it is time to examine more fully, in this Section, the nature of the Communion we share, the bonds which hold it together, the ways in which all this can be threatened and how such threats might be met. This will enable the report to offer, in Section C, the ways in which we believe our Communion needs strengthening for its future mission and life, before finally, in Section D, offering our recommendations to the Archbishop of Canterbury and his fellow primates on the ways in which our present crisis ought to be resolved.
44. This section of the report considers in more detail the nature of our communion with God and with one another; the specific elements of our common life which bind us together and thus equip us for God's mission in the world; and the ways in which, within our common life, diversity produces tension and difficulty. In so doing, the section sets out the principles against which recent events and actions may be measured.

The communion we share

45. The communion we enjoy as Anglicans involves a sharing in double 'bonds of affection': those that flow from our shared status as children of God in Christ, and those that arise from our shared and inherited identity, which is the particular history of the churches to which we belong. This is a relationship of 'covenantal affection'; that is, our mutual affection is not subject to whim and mood, but involves us in a covenant relation of binding mutual promises, with God in Christ and with one another. All those called by the gospel of Jesus Christ and set apart by God's gift of baptism are incorporated into the communion of the Body of Christ. This communion is primarily a relationship with God, who is himself a communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and it binds every member of Christ into the whole body.²⁵
46. Our communion enables us, in mutual interdependence, to engage in our primary task, which is to take forward God's mission to his needy and much-loved world. As a means to that end, it is also necessarily the expression of the worldwide, i.e. 'catholic', nature of the Church. In both these respects, communion remains God's gift as well as God's command.

²⁵ Extended treatment of these themes can be found in Eames, ch.2, 14-24 and *The Virginia Report: the report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (1997)*, ch.2.

47. When “the Anglican Communion” describes itself as such, it is self-consciously describing that *part* of the Body of Christ which shares an inheritance through the Anglican tradition, that is, from the Church of England, whose history encompasses the ancient Celtic and Saxon churches of the British Isles, and which was given fresh theological expression during the period of the Reformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Reformers of that time looked back explicitly to the Bible and the early Fathers, and had every intention that their theology would be ‘catholic’ in the sense of sharing the faith of the universal Church. The very fact that the family of churches which traces its roots back to the ancient churches of the British Isles should call itself an Anglican Communion is itself indicative of the twin fundamental concepts on which the community is built: our shared inheritance (‘Anglican’) and our worldwide fellowship as God’s children (‘communion’). That shared inheritance has itself included a developing understanding of communion, which has been expressed, for instance, in some of our ecumenical dialogues. It also makes us aware of a responsibility, not only to our contemporaries within the Communion, but to those with whom we share in the Communion of Saints.
48. Various different but interlocking descriptions of the Anglican Communion exist amongst us. The Lambeth Conference has described the Anglican Communion as a fellowship of churches in communion with the See of Canterbury.²⁶ Individual provinces express their own communion relationships in a variety of juridical forms, as: bipartite (in communion with Canterbury);²⁷ multipartite (in communion with all Anglican churches);²⁸ or simply through the idea of “belonging to the Anglican Communion”.²⁹ Communion is therefore a relationship between churches (institutional or ecclesial communion) as well as between individual Christians (personal communion).
49. Communion is, in fact, all about mutual relationships. It is expressed by community, equality, common life, sharing, interdependence, and mutual affection and respect. It subsists in visible unity, common confession of the apostolic faith, common belief in scripture and the creeds, common baptism and shared eucharist, and a mutually recognised common ministry. Communion means that each church recognises that the other belongs to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, and shares in the mission of the whole people of God. It involves practising a common liturgical tradition, and intending to listen, speak and act alongside one another in obedience to the gospel. In communion, each church acknowledges and respects the interdependence and autonomy of the other, putting the needs of the global fellowship before its own. Through such communion, each church is enabled to find completeness through its relations to the others, while fulfilling its own

²⁶ Lambeth Conference 1930 Resolution 49.

²⁷ e.g. “The Church of Ireland will maintain communion with the sister Church of England”: Ireland, Constitution, Preamble and Declaration, III.

²⁸ e.g. “The Church of Nigeria shall be in full Communion with the See of Canterbury and with all dioceses, provinces and regional Churches which are in full Communion with the See of Canterbury: Nigeria, Constitution, Chapter 1.3(1).

²⁹ e.g. “The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America ... is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion”, a fellowship of churches “in communion with the See of Canterbury”: ECUSA, Constitution, Preamble.

particular calling within its own cultural context. This does not mean, of course, that each church must accept every theological opinion, or follow every sacramental devotion or liturgical practice, characteristic of the other. Such a distinction, between the essentials in which we agree and the non-essentials which do not inhibit communion, is a vital part of life within the Anglican Communion, and is explored further elsewhere.³⁰

50. When people use the normally imprecise language of ‘impaired’, ‘fractured’, or ‘restricted’ communion, or speak of there being ‘degrees’ of communion between one church or group of churches and another, they commonly mean that only some of the characteristics outlined in the previous paragraph now obtain. Communion is now “less full than it was”.³¹ Which characteristics are affected (perhaps a failure in complete mutual recognition of ministries, as has happened since the ordination of women to the priesthood and their consecration to the episcopate) will vary from case to case, contributing to the confusing nature of such terms.³² Such a condition of impairment is not merely sad, and detrimental to our common mission and witness. It could in principle call into question the constitutional position of several member churches of the Anglican Communion, since many, as we have just seen, mark out their identity in terms precisely of being in full communion either with Canterbury or with all other churches in communion with Canterbury. But there has been little consensus within the Anglican Communion on how precisely to identify, beyond a bare assertion, that such impairment, fracturing, and so forth, has taken place, let alone how such a situation might be remedied.³³
51. Communion clearly makes demands on all within it. It involves obligations, and corresponding rights, which flow from the theological truths on which the life of the Christian community rests. The Lambeth Quadrilateral commits Anglicans to “a series of normative practices: scripture is *read*, tradition is *received*, sacramental worship is *practised*, and the historic character of apostolic leadership is *retained*”.³⁴ The commitments of communion provide objective criteria by which to understand the rights and responsibilities that go with the relationship and which promote and protect the common good of the worldwide community of churches. Many obligations are implicit in the foundation, purposes, forms, subjects and substance of communion, and thus relate to matters of critical common concern to the global Anglican fellowship. For instance, the divine foundation of communion should oblige each church to avoid unilateral action on contentious issues which may result in broken

³⁰ See paragraphs 36-39, 87-96.

³¹ *Women in the Anglican Episcopate: theology guidelines and practice*, The Eames Commission and the Monitoring Group Reports, IV:57 (Toronto, 1998).

³² See generally *The Virginia Report* and the work of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC) which develop longstanding ideas enunciated by successive Lambeth Conferences.

³³ For analysis of the declarations of impaired communion, see N. Doe, ‘Communion and Autonomy in Anglicanism: Nature and Maintenance’, pp.20-24, Lambeth Commission website <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenical/commissions/lambeth/documents/200402whatisitfor.pdf>

³⁴ See Summary Argument from the IATDC’s ‘Communion Study’, p.3; see also IARCCUM Sub-commission submission, p.18. Both documents are set out on the Commission’s website <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenical/commissions/lambeth/kanuga/index.cfm>

communion. It is an ancient canonical principle that what touches all should be decided by all. The relational nature of communion requires each church to learn more fully what it means to be part of that communion, so that its members may be fulfilled and strengthened in and through their relations with other churches. Communion obliges each church to foster, respect and maintain all those marks of common identity, and all those instruments of unity and communion, which it shares with fellow churches, seeking a common mind in essential matters of common concern: in short, to act interdependently, not independently.

The bonds of communion

52. These broader considerations lead to reflection in more detail on the specific bonds which hold the Anglican Communion together. Communion, after all, does not simply happen. Even at the human level, it is not left to chance and tacit goodwill. There are several aspects of our common life which, as well as fulfilling the primary purpose of enabling the Church to fulfil its gospel mission in and for the world, serve to draw us together and hold us in fellowship.

The authority of scripture

53. Central among these is *scripture*. Within Anglicanism, scripture has always been recognised as the Church's supreme authority, and as such ought to be seen as a focus and means of unity. The emphasis on scripture grew not least from the insistence of the early Anglican reformers on the importance of the Bible and the Fathers over against what they saw as illegitimate mediaeval developments; it was part of their appeal to ancient undivided Christian faith and life. The seventeenth and eighteenth century divines hammered out their foundations of "scripture, tradition and reason"; in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries we have seen the 'Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral', in which scripture takes first place.³⁵ The Bible has always been at the centre of Anglican belief and life, embodied and exemplified by the fact that the reading and singing of scripture has always been at the centre of Anglican worship.
54. However, the common phrase "the authority of scripture" can be misleading; the confusions that result may relate to some of the divisions just noted. Scripture itself, after all, regularly speaks of *God* as the supreme authority. When Jesus speaks of "all authority in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28.18), he declares that this authority is given, not to the books that his followers will write, but to himself. Jesus, the living Word, is the one to whom the written Word bears witness as God's ultimate and personal self-expression. The New Testament is full of similar ascriptions of authority to the Father, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit. Thus the phrase "the authority of scripture", if it is to be based on what scripture itself says, must be regarded as a shorthand, and a potentially misleading one at that, for the longer and more complex notion of "the authority of the triune God, *exercised through scripture*". The question of how this

³⁵ This 'Quadrilateral' was first adopted by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA) meeting in synod in Chicago in 1886. It was subsequently adopted as a fundamental basis for ecumenical reconciliation in Resolution 11 of the Lambeth Conference 1888 – reproduced in Appendix Three/1.

‘exercised through’ works in practice is vital to understanding the kind of authority which scripture possesses and hence to the nature and exercise of actual authority within the Church. It may be, historically, that the phrase ‘authority of scripture’ has characteristically emerged in contexts of protest (when one part of the Church appeals to scripture against something being done by another part). When we attempt to apply it more widely, to an entire understanding of the Church’s mission and common life, it quickly becomes apparent that its implications need to be thought out more fully.

55. For Jesus and the early Christians, ‘authority’ was not conceived as a static source of information or the giving of orders (as the word ‘authority’ has sometimes implied), but in terms of the dynamic inbreaking of God’s kingdom, that is, God’s sovereign, saving, redeeming and reconciling rule over all creation. This saving rule of God, long promised and awaited in Israel, broke in upon the world in and through Jesus and his death and resurrection, to be then implemented through the work of the Spirit until the final act of grace which will create the promised new heavens and new earth. If the notion of scriptural authority is itself to be rooted in scripture, and to be consonant with the central truths confessed by Christians from the earliest days, it must be seen that the purpose of scripture is not simply to supply true information, nor just to prescribe in matters of belief and conduct, nor merely to act as a court of appeal, but to be part of the dynamic life of the Spirit through which God the Father is making the victory which was won by Jesus’ death and resurrection operative within the world and in and through human beings. Scripture is thus part of the means by which God directs the Church in its mission, energises it for that task, and shapes and unites it so that it may be both equipped for this work and itself part of the message.
56. How then does scripture function in this way? This is not the place for a detailed consideration of the respective authority of the Old and New Testaments, important though that discussion is. The early Christians understood themselves to be both beneficiaries and agents of the saving sovereignty of God, the ‘kingdom’ which had been accomplished in Jesus Christ. The ‘authority’ of the apostles – a concept worked out with great pain and paradox by Paul in 2 Corinthians – was their God-given and Spirit-driven vocation as witnesses of the resurrection, through whose announcement of the good news God was powerfully at work to call men and women to salvation (Romans 1.16-17) and thus to create the Church as the sign and foretaste of new creation (Ephesians 1-3). It is within this context of apostolic witness, drawing its ‘authority’ from the victory of Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit (Matthew 28.18-20; 2 Corinthians 3.1-4.6, 13.3-4), that the writings we call the New Testament came to be written, precisely to be vehicles of the Spirit’s work in energising the Church in its mission and shaping it in the holiness of new creation. Thus, as scholarship has emphasised, the writers of the canonical gospels (despite all the obvious differences between them, and the multiple sources upon which they drew) were conscious of telling the story of Jesus in such a way as to demonstrate its fulfilment of the story of Israel and its foundational character for the mission and life of the Church. From the first, the New Testament was intended as, and perceived to be, not a repository of various suggestions for developing one’s private spirituality, but as the collection of books through

which the Spirit who was working so powerfully through the apostles would develop and continue that work in the churches. This is why, from very early in the Church, the apostolic writings were read during worship, as part of both the Church's praise to God for his mighty acts and of the Church's drawing fresh strength from God for mission and holiness. This, rather than a quasi-legal process of 'appeal', is the primary and dynamic context within which the shorthand phrase "authority of scripture" finds its deepest meaning.

Scripture and interpretation

57. This means that for scripture to 'work' as the vehicle of God's authority it is vital that it be read at the heart of worship in a way which (through appropriate lectionaries, and the use of scripture in canticles etc.) allows it to be heard, understood and reflected upon, not as a pleasing and religious background noise, but as God's living and active word. The message of scripture, as a whole and in its several parts, must be preached and taught in all possible and appropriate ways. It is the responsibility of the whole Church to engage with the Bible together; within that, each individual Christian, to the fullest extent of which they are capable, must study it and learn from it, thoughtfully and prayerfully. Within this context, the Church's accredited leaders have a responsibility, through constant teaching and preaching, to enable the Church to grow to maturity, so that when difficult judgements are required they may be made in full knowledge of the texts.
58. The place of Christian leaders – chiefly within the Anglican tradition, of bishops – as *teachers of scripture* can hardly be overemphasised. The 'authority' of bishops cannot reside solely or primarily in legal structures, but, as in Acts 6.4, in their ministry of "prayer and the word of God". If this is ignored, the model of 'the authority of scripture' which scripture itself offers is failing to function as it should. The authoritative teaching of scripture cannot be left to academic researchers, vital though they are. The accredited leaders of the Church – within the diocese, the bishop(s); within the Communion, the primates – must be people through whose prayerful teaching ministry the authority of God vested in scripture is brought to bear - in mission within the world and in wise teaching to build up the Church.
59. As this task proceeds, questions of *interpretation* are rightly raised, not as an attempt to avoid or relativise scripture and its authority, but as a way of ensuring that it really is scripture that is being heard, not simply the echo of our own voices (though our own responsive hearing is necessary) or the memory of earlier Christian interpretations (though we must always take them into account: 'tradition' consists primarily of the recollection of what the scripture-reading Church has said). Historical interpretation, from ongoing lexicographical work (to make sure the nuances of ancient words are properly and precisely heard) to large-scale historical reconstruction (to ensure we are not making anachronistic assumptions), remains vital. It can be deeply challenging to entrenched views of what scripture is thought to be saying, not least where it has been read within an unchallenged philosophical or cultural matrix.
60. This applies equally, in our own day and setting, to the assumptions and entrenched views of the Enlightenment (which have often resulted in

unwarranted negative judgements on much biblical material), as well as to the assumptions and entrenched views of a pre- or anti-critical conservatism. Biblical scholarship needs simultaneously to be free to explore different meanings and to be constrained by loyalty to the community of the Church across time and space. It cannot pretend to a detached ‘neutrality’. Such pretence (as in phrases like “the objective results of scholarship”) is often, and rightly, seen as either a grab for power or a mere protest against alternative interpretations. Where a fresh wave of scholarship generates ideas which are perceived as a threat to something the Church has always held dear, it is up to the scholars concerned, on the one hand, to explain how what is now proposed not only accords with but actually enhances the central core of the Church’s faith. And it is up to the Church, on the other hand, not to reject new proposals out of hand, but to listen carefully, to test everything, and to be prepared to change its mind if and when a convincing case is made.

61. The current crisis thus constitutes a call to the whole Anglican Communion to re-evaluate the ways in which we have read, heard, studied and digested scripture. We can no longer be content to drop random texts into arguments, imagining that the point is thereby proved, or indeed to sweep away sections of the New Testament as irrelevant to today’s world, imagining that problems are thereby solved. We need mature study, wise and prayerful discussion, and a joint commitment to hearing and obeying God as he speaks in scripture, to discovering more of the Jesus Christ to whom all authority is committed, and to being open to the fresh wind of the Spirit who inspired scripture in the first place. If our present difficulties force us to read and learn together from scripture in new ways, they will not have been without profit.
62. A mention of scripture today can sometimes seem actually divisive, so aware are we of the bewildering range of available interpretative strategies and results. This is tragic, since, as with the Spirit who inspired scripture, we should expect that the Bible would be a means of unity, not division. In fact, our shared reading of scripture across boundaries of culture, region and tradition ought to be the central feature of our common life, guiding us together into an appropriately rich and diverse unity by leading us forward from entrenched positions into fresh appreciation of the riches of the gospel as articulated in the scriptures. This is characteristically and appropriately accomplished through the various ministries of the Church, not least the next of the bonds of unity now to be considered.

The episcopate

63. The unity of the Communion is both expressed and put into effect among other things through the *episcopate*. At the Reformation, the Church of England maintained the threefold order of ministry, in continuity with the early Church. As the events of the seventeenth century bear witness, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that the Church of England would end up with a continuing episcopacy. But in the event “there was no attempt [during the sixteenth-century Reformation] to minimise the role of bishops as ministers of word and sacrament or to stop a collegial relation between bishops and presbyters in the

diocese or bishops together at the level of Province.”³⁶ Within a short period of time, in fact, this retention of episcopacy as the foundational form of government within the Anglican churches became the distinctive mark of its claim to be both Catholic and Protestant; and, reflecting the practice of the very early Church, the ministry of bishops as chief pastors and teachers of the faith, as the focus of unity and source of ministry, became central. The principle of Anglican episcopacy was fought over and defended in the life of the Scottish Episcopal Church. It was retained in the life of the Episcopal Church (USA). It was subsequently, and carefully, preserved in the life of all thirty-eight provinces of the Anglican Communion, including the United Churches of South Asia. As recognised in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadilateral, an episcopate at once local and universal is therefore an essential element of the life of the Anglican Communion. And, to link once more with scripture as the central fact of unity within the Communion, it is the bishop’s role as teacher of scripture that is meant, above all, to be not merely a symbolic but a very practical means of giving the Church the energy and direction it needs for its mission and therefore the motivation and the groundwork for its unity.

64. It has always been maintained within Anglicanism that a bishop is more than simply the local chief pastor.³⁷ Bishops represent the universal Church to the local and *vice versa*.³⁸ This is why individual churches have developed ways of confirming the election of bishops, signifying their acceptability to the wider Church. Without such attention to general acceptability, the episcopate, instead of being in its very existence one of the bonds of unity in the Communion, quickly becomes an occasion and focus of disunity.
65. The work, and symbolic unifying value, of the local episcopate is matched at the transprovincial level by the four Instruments of Unity (described more fully in paragraphs 98-104), and especially by the Archbishop of Canterbury himself as the chief pastor of the entire Communion. Their role and work is not a substitute for the mutual accountability of the rest of the Church, but is rather a means of expressing it, drawing it together, and enabling the whole Church to listen to each member and each member to listen to the whole. It is with this in mind that successive Lambeth Conferences have urged the primates to shoulder the burden of enhanced responsibility for the unity of the Communion, a request echoed by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission at its meeting in September 2003.³⁹ This request draws on that theology of wider apostolic and episcopal leadership which is expressed in the New Testament by the apostles themselves (e.g. Paul, writing with authority to various churches including some he had not himself founded), by such writers as Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus

³⁶ *The Virginia Report*, paragraph 3.25.

³⁷ See also Section D : The Maintenance of Communion, paragraphs 124-132.

³⁸ “We have seen that a Bishop’s ministry is ‘representative’ in several different senses. A Bishop represents the local church to the wider, but also the other way round. Bishops represent Christ to the people, but also bring the people and their prayers to God. Finally, they often represent God and his Church in the world at large.” Dr Michael Nazir-Ali in *Working with the Spirit: Choosing diocesan bishops*, CHP (2001), p.107.

³⁹ ‘Reflections offered to the Primates of the Anglican Communion by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury’. See <http://www.aco.org/ecumenical/commissions/iatdc/20031015primates.cfm>

and Cyprian, and in subsequent centuries by the recognition of the role of the great sees of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Rome and Jerusalem.

66. The very existence of the Instruments of Unity points to the desire of the Communion to work together, with bishops, clergy and laity all involved as fully as possible. This is where the ongoing synods, at all levels of the Church, express by their existence, as well as (it is to be hoped) by their actual work, the unity-in-diversity which characterises our life in communion. In 1988, Archbishop Robert Runcie put the challenge this way:

“...are we being called through events and their theological interpretation to move from independence to interdependence? If we answer yes, then we cannot dodge the question of how this is to be given ‘flesh’: how is our interdependence articulated and made effective; how is it to be structured? ... We need to have confidence that authority is not dispersed to the point of dissolution and ineffectiveness ... Let me put it in starkly simple terms: do we really *want* unity within the Anglican Communion? Is our worldwide family of Christians worth bonding together? Or is our paramount concern the preservation of promotion of that particular expression of Anglicanism which has developed within the culture of our own province? ... I believe we still need the Anglican Communion. But we have reached the stage in the growth of the Communion when we must begin to make radical choices, or growth will imperceptibly turn to decay. I believe the choice between independence and interdependence, already set before us as a Communion in embryo twenty-five years ago, is quite simply the choice between unity or gradual fragmentation.”⁴⁰

What this bears witness to is the understanding that the churches of the Anglican Communion, if that Communion is to mean anything at all, are obliged to move together, to walk together in *synodality*. It is by listening to, and interacting with, voices from as many different parts of the family as possible that the Church discovers what its unity and communion really mean. Synodality as a characteristic of the Anglican Communion finds expression in Lambeth Conferences as early as 1867 (Resolutions 4, 5, 8 and 10) as well as in the Lambeth Conference of 1897 (Resolution 24).

Discernment in communion and reception

67. As the whole Church, corporately and individually, gives attention to the reading and pondering of scripture, we are called to the specific unifying task of a common *discernment in communion*. We come from a rich variety of cultures, and each of us is called to read scripture within, and apply it to, our own particular setting – and to respect the fact that other churches face the same demands within their own contexts. We cannot, therefore, confine our readings of scripture to our own setting alone (as scholarship, sometimes claimed as the preserve of the western academy, has often done). On the contrary, one of the

⁴⁰ R Runcie, Opening Address, reproduced in *The Truth Shall Make You Free, The Lambeth Conference 1988*, CHP (1988), p.16.

ways in which we discern the limits of appropriate inculturation is by our rendering account to one another, across traditional boundaries, for the gospel we proclaim and live and the teaching we offer. One of the hallmarks of healthy worldwide communion will be precisely our readiness to learn from one another (which by no means indicates an unquestioning acceptance of one another's readings, but rather a rich mutual accountability) as we read scripture together. To the extent that this has not been a major feature of our common life in recent decades, we should not be surprised that major divisions have opened up amongst us. It is by reading scripture too little, not by reading it too much, that we have allowed ourselves to drift apart.

68. Within our common life, one way in which unity has been maintained is by subjecting fresh developments within the Anglican Communion to a test of *reception*. In classical theological terms, 'reception' was the process by which the pronouncements of a Council of the Church were tested by how the faithful 'received' it. The *consensus fidelium* ('common mind of the believers') constituted the ultimate check that a new declaration was in harmony with the faith as it had been received. More recently, the doctrine has been used in Anglicanism as a way of testing whether a controversial development, not yet approved by a universal Council of the Church but nevertheless arising within a province by legitimate processes, might gradually, over time, come to be accepted as an authentic development of the faith. This offers a clear threefold sequence:

- (i) theological debate and discussion
- (ii) formal action, and
- (iii) increased consultation to see whether the formal action settles down and makes itself at home.

This process of consultation, designed to strengthen Communion, is the very opposite of confrontation, and leads to a shared discernment of God's truth. It is a key way of maintaining the unity of the Church through a time of experiment and uncertainty.⁴¹

69. We should note, however, that the doctrine of reception only makes sense if the proposals concern matters on which the Church has not so far made up its mind. It cannot be applied in the case of actions which are explicitly against the current teaching of the Anglican Communion as a whole, and/or of individual provinces. No province, diocese or parish has the right to introduce a novelty which goes against such teaching and excuse it on the grounds that it has simply been put forward for reception. In such a case, if change is desired, it must be sought through the appropriate channels, which we describe elsewhere.

70. The Anglican Communion is thus bound together in a variety of ways, with scripture as the constant factor, the historic episcopate, the Instruments of Unity, and the synodical life of the Church as the practical means of living together

⁴¹ Consideration of the process of reception is well developed in *The Virginia Report*, ch.4 'Levels of Communion - Subsidiarity and Interdependence' 4:14-4:21.

under scripture, and with discernment and reception as the modes in which the Communion operates in relation to new proposals and the emergence of differences. It is important to note that these Bonds of Unity are different in kind from those which operate in the Roman Catholic Church, in which the Pontiff, with the support of the Curia, enjoys “supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power”, which he can always freely exercise.⁴² The Anglican way, theological, symbolic and practical, is diffused among the different aspects of the life of the Communion precisely in such a way as to give supreme authority, in the sense outlined above, to scripture as the locus and means of God’s word, energising the Church for its mission and sustaining it in its unity.

Diversity within communion

71. The nature of unity within the Anglican Communion necessarily includes the rich diversity which comes from factors such as local culture and different traditions of reading scripture. Diversity is a great strength; without care, however, it can also be a source of great tension and division. Within the Communion we have developed theological and practical ways of working at this problem and of distinguishing acceptable and unacceptable forms of diversity.

Autonomy

72. This diversity is enshrined in the *autonomy* of the individual provinces. This is fundamental to Anglican polity. But ‘autonomy’ is a much-misunderstood concept and, not least because it is often referred to in current disputes, it is important to examine it in more detail.
73. Although there is a sense in which the Church of England’s break with Rome in the sixteenth century was an assertion of that Church’s ‘autonomy’, in more recent times the concept of ‘provincial autonomy’ in Anglican thinking was developed in its early twentieth century context to signify ‘independence from the control of the British Crown’. The established Church of England of the Reformation was, and remains, subject to the royal supremacy, and many overseas Anglican churches at one time or other had been similarly subject; speaking of their ‘autonomy’ came to refer to their disengagement from that supremacy.
74. A further development in meaning then occurred: as provinces received or devised their own constitutions, autonomy (itself acquired or derived, not inherent) came to be interpreted more in terms of “the right of each church to self-determination”, expressed in the possession of extensive powers over the determination of local issues.⁴³ Thus, some provincial constitutions formally grant to their principal synods extensive jurisdiction over a wide range of matters including faith, order and discipline. At different times, this right to self-determination has been expressed by Anglicans variously as: autonomy (of

⁴² Code of Canon Law, canon 331.

⁴³ Examples - see *The Virginia Report* 3.26, 3.27, 3.28.

province or diocese),⁴⁴ independence as a limited freedom,⁴⁵ and, recently, within a more nuanced context of interdependence and subsidiarity.⁴⁶ These autonomous structures create a context in which the unity of the Communion, described above, can be expressed in diverse ways. This inevitably raises the key question of how much diversity is to be allowed or encouraged, on what matters, and under what conditions.

75. The word ‘autonomy’ represents within Anglican discourse a far more limited form of independent government than is popularly understood by many today. Literally, ‘autonomous’ means ‘having one’s own laws’ (*auto* - self, *nomos* - law), and the autonomy of a body or institution means “[t]he right of self-government, of making its own laws and administering *its own affairs*”.⁴⁷ In the secular world it is well settled that ‘autonomic’ laws are those created by a body or persons within the community on which has been conferred subordinate and restricted legislative power. Autonomy, therefore, is not the same thing as sovereignty or independence; it more closely resembles the orthodox polity of ‘autocephaly’, which denotes autonomy in communion.
76. A body is thus, in this sense, ‘autonomous’ *only in relation to others*: autonomy exists in a relation with a wider community or system of which the autonomous entity forms part. The word ‘autonomous’ in this sense actually implies not an isolated individualism, but the idea of being free to determine one’s own life within a wider obligation to others. The key idea is autonomy-in-communion, that is, freedom held within interdependence. The autonomy of each Anglican province therefore implies that the church lives in relation to, and exercises its autonomy most fully in the context of, the global Communion. This idea of autonomy-in-relation is clearly implicit in the laws of some churches: for instance, South East Asia describes itself as “a fully autonomous part of the Anglican Communion”.⁴⁸
77. As the right to self-government, autonomy is a form of limited authority. Ordinarily, an autonomous body (unlike a sovereign body) is capable only of making decisions for itself in relation to its own affairs at its own level. Autonomy, then, is linked to subsidiarity (see paragraphs 38-39, 83, 94-95).
78. Understood in this way, each autonomous church has the unfettered right to order and regulate its own local affairs, through its own system of government and law. Each such church is free from direct control by any decision of any ecclesiastical body external to itself in relation to its exclusively internal affairs

⁴⁴ Lambeth Conference 1930, Resolution 48 *on the principle of autonomy*; Lambeth Conference 1978, Resolution 21.3 - recognises “the autonomy of each of its member Churches, acknowledging the legal right of each Church to make its own decision...”

⁴⁵ “The Churches represented [here] are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognises the restraints of truth and love. They are not free to deny the truth. They are not free to ignore the fellowship...”, Lambeth Conference 1920, SPCK (1920), Evangelical Letter, p.14.

⁴⁶ See *The Virginia Report*, ch.4.

⁴⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, (Oxford 1989).

⁴⁸ South East Asia, Constitution, Fundamental Declarations, 5.

(unless that external decision is authorised under, or incorporated in, its own law).⁴⁹

79. However, some affairs treated within and by a church may have a dual character: they may be of internal (domestic) and external (common) concern. Autonomy includes the right of a church to make decisions in those of its affairs which also touch the wider external community of which it forms part, which are also the affairs of others, provided those internal decisions are fully compatible with the interests, standards, unity and good order of the wider community of which the autonomous body forms part. If they are not so compatible, whilst there may be no question about their legal validity, they will impose strains not only upon that church's wider relationship with other churches, but on that church's inner self-understanding as part of "the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" in relation to some of its own members.
80. In our view, therefore, 'autonomy' thus denotes not unlimited freedom but what we might call freedom-in-relation, so it is subject to limits generated by the commitments of communion. Consequently, the very nature of autonomy itself obliges each church to have regard to the common good of the global Anglican community and the Church universal.
81. These ideas are shared by other Christian traditions. At the present time, we sense that these ideas are also well understood in terms of the autonomy of an individual diocese in relation to the province of which it forms part, and perhaps also an individual parish in relation to the diocese of which it forms part, since they have been given strong institutional expression. They seem much less well understood when it comes to the autonomy of a province in relation to the global Communion.
82. Since autonomy is closely related to interdependence and freedom-in-relation, there are legitimate limits (both substantive and procedural) on the exercise of this autonomy, demanded by the relationships and commitments of communion and the acknowledgement of common identity. Communion is, in fact, the fundamental limit to autonomy. In essential matters of common concern to the worldwide fellowship of churches (affairs, that is, which touch both the particular church and the wider community of which it forms part), we believe that each church in the exercise of its autonomy should:
 - ◆ consider, promote and respect the common good of the Anglican Communion and its constituent churches (as discerned in communion through the Instruments of Unity)
 - ◆ maintain its communion with fellow churches, and avoid jeopardising it, by bringing potentially contentious initiatives, prior to implementation, to the rest of the communion in dialogue, consultation, discernment and agreement

⁴⁹ In saying this, we are aware of course that, as a matter of civil law, a narrowly secular approach is likely to be adopted by the courts which would emphasise the strict legal autonomy of each church. See, for example, *R v Ecclesiastical Commissioners of both Houses of Parliament ex parte The Church Society* (1994), 6 Admin, LR 670.

in communion with the fellowship of churches (through the Instruments of Unity), and

- ◆ be able to depart, where appropriate and acceptable, on the basis of its own corporate conscience and with the blessing of the communion, from the standards of the community of which is an autonomous part, provided such departure is neither critical to the maintenance of communion nor likely to harm the common good of the Anglican Communion and of the Church universal (again, as determined by the Instruments of Unity).
83. ‘Autonomy’ in this sense is thus closely linked to *subsidiarity*, discussed above.⁵⁰ This is clear in *The Virginia Report* which was presented to the Lambeth Conference 1998. It argued that “a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.” (4:8). “However,” the Report continues, “when decisions are taken by Provinces on matters which touch the life of the whole Communion without consultation, they may give rise to tension as other Provinces or other Christian traditions reject what has been decided” (4:13). In this same section on subsidiarity *The Virginia Report* makes reference to the Report of the Eames Commission (III, 43-44), noting that where such decisions are concerned, there is need for consultation with appropriate agents of Anglican interdependence prior to action.
84. Autonomy and Communion therefore belong together, as many Christian traditions have stressed and as, indeed, emerges from our ecumenical dialogues. They are thoroughly compatible, interdependent and directed to the same goal, namely the mission of the Church. Each draws from the other in creative tension. Each church has a corporate ecclesial personhood and exists in and for its fellow churches. Each church has for itself the greatest possible liberty which is compatible with the unity and good order of the Anglican Communion, in governance, ministry, doctrine, liturgy, rites, ecumenism and property.
85. Autonomy gives full scope for the development of authentic local living out of the Christian faith and mission, in what has come to be known as *inculturation*. This is an essential part of the Christian mission: each church must find fresh ways to proclaim the Gospel of Christ into the context of the world in which it is living. The eternal truth of the gospel relates in different ways to the particulars of any one society, as we see already within the life of the earliest church as described in Acts. This combination of faithfulness to the gospel and inculturation into different societies will inevitably produce a proper and welcome diversity within the life of the Church. Such diversity sometimes raises the question as to whether faithfulness has been abandoned (think of the shock to some devout Orthodox worshippers at observing western Christians crossing themselves the wrong way round); but diversity, as we have seen, is in principle to be welcomed and celebrated as normal and healthy. As the 1988 Lambeth Conference put it:

⁵⁰ In paragraphs 38-39, 75-83.

“It is right and proper that the one faith and discipline of the Church should be ‘incarnate’ in varied cultural forms ... the Gospel of Jesus does not come to people in the abstract, but to specific men and women.”⁵¹

This means that the much discussed problem of ‘Christ and Culture’ is in large part a problem of how to communicate the gospel effectively in widely differing cultural situations.

86. There are, however, limits to diversity. In the life of the Christian churches, these limits are defined by truth and charity. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 put it this way:

“The Churches represented in [the Communion] are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognises the restraints of truth and love. They are not free to deny the truth. They are not free to ignore the fellowship.”⁵²

This means that any development needs to be explored for its resonance with the truth, and with the utmost charity on the part of all – charity that grants that a new thing can be offered humbly and with integrity, and charity that might refrain from an action which might harm a sister or brother.

Adiaphora

87. As the Church has explored the question of limits to diversity, it has frequently made use of the notion of *adiaphora*: things which do not make a difference, matters regarded as non-essential, issues about which one can disagree without dividing the Church. This notion lies at the heart of many current disputes. The classic biblical statements of the principle are in Romans 14.1-15.13 and 1 Corinthians 8-10. There, in different though related contexts, Paul insists that such matters as food and drink (eating meat and drinking wine, or abstaining from doing so; eating meat that had been offered to idols, or refusing to do so), are matters of private conviction over which Christians who take different positions ought not to judge one another. They must strive for that united worship and witness which celebrate and display the fact that they are worshipping the same God and are servants of the same Lord.
88. This principle of ‘adiaphora’ was invoked and developed by the early English Reformers, particularly in their claim that, in matters of eucharistic theology, specific interpretations (transubstantiation was particularly in mind) were not to be insisted upon as ‘necessary to be believed’, and that a wider range of interpretations was to be allowed. Ever since then, the notion of ‘adiaphora’ has been a major feature of Anglican theology, over against those schools of thought, both Roman and Protestant, in which even the smallest details of belief and practice are sometimes regarded as essential parts of an indivisible whole.

⁵¹ *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988* (London: CHP, 1988), ‘Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns’, p.87(23).

⁵² Lambeth Conference 1920, SPCK (1920), *Evangelical Letter*, p.14.

89. This does not mean, however, that either for Paul or in Anglican theology all things over which Christians in fact disagree are automatically to be placed into the category of 'adiaphora'. It has never been enough to say that we must celebrate or at least respect 'difference' without further ado. Not all 'differences' can be tolerated. (We know this well enough in the cases of, say, racism or child abuse; we would not say "some of us are racists, some of us are not, so let's celebrate our diversity"). This question is frequently begged in current discussions, as for instance when people suggest without further argument, in relation to a particular controversial issue, that it should not be allowed to impair the Church's unity, in other words that the matter in question is not as serious as some suppose. In the letters already quoted, Paul is quite clear that there are several matters – obvious examples being incest (1 Corinthians 5) and lawsuits between Christians before non-Christian courts (1 Corinthians 6) – in which there is no question of saying "some Christians think this, other Christians think that, and you must learn to live with the difference". On the contrary: Paul insists that some types of behaviour are incompatible with inheriting God's coming kingdom, and must not therefore be tolerated within the Church. 'Difference' has become a concept within current postmodern discourse which can easily mislead the contemporary western church into forgetting the principles, enshrined in scripture and often re-articulated within Anglicanism, for distinguishing one type of difference from another.
90. The question then naturally arises as to *how* one can tell, and indeed as to *who* can decide, which types of behaviour count as 'adiaphora' and which do not. For Paul, the categories are not arbitrary, but clearly distinct. For instance: that which would otherwise separate Jew and Gentile within the Church is 'adiaphora'. That which embodies and expresses renewed humanity in Christ is always mandatory for Christians; that which embodies the dehumanising turning-away-from-God which Paul characterises with such terms as 'sin', 'flesh', and so on, is always forbidden. This, of course, leaves several questions unanswered, but at least sketches a map on which further discussions may be located.
91. To this end, we note that, though Paul's notion of 'adiaphora' does indeed envisage situations where particular aspects of lifestyle are associated with particular cultures, he never supposes that human culture in the abstract is simply 'neutral', so that all habits of thought and life within a particular culture are to be regarded either as 'inessential' or for that matter 'to be supported and enhanced'. When we put the notion of 'adiaphora' together with that of inculturation (see above in paragraphs 32, 67, 85), this is what we find: in Paul's world, many cultures prided themselves on such things as anger and violence on the one hand and sexual profligacy on the other. Paul insists that both of these are ruled out for those in Christ. Others prided themselves on such things as justice and peace; Paul demonstrated that the gospel of Jesus enhanced and fulfilled such aspirations. The Church in each culture, and each generation, must hammer out the equivalent complex and demanding judgements.
92. Even when the notion of 'adiaphora' applies, it does not mean that Christians are left free to pursue their own personal choices without restriction. Paul insists

that those who take what he calls the “strong” position, claiming the right to eat and drink what others regard as off limits, must take care of the “weak”, those who still have scruples of conscience about the matters in question – since those who are lured into acting against conscience are thereby drawn into sin. Paul does not envisage this as a static situation. He clearly hopes that his own teaching, and mutual acceptance within the Christian family, will bring people to one mind. But he knows from pastoral experience that people do not change their minds overnight on matters deep within their culture and experience.

93. Whenever, therefore, a claim is made that a particular theological or ethical stance is something ‘indifferent’, and that people should be free to follow it without the Church being thereby split, there are two questions to be asked. First, is this in fact the kind of matter which can count as ‘inessential’, or does it touch on something vital? Second, if it is indeed ‘adiaphora’, is it something that, nevertheless, a sufficient number of other Christians will find scandalous and offensive, either in the sense that they will be led into acting against their own consciences or that they will be forced, for conscience’s sake, to break fellowship with those who go ahead? If the answer to the latter question is ‘yes’, the biblical guidelines insist that those who have no scruples about the proposed action should nevertheless refrain from going ahead.
94. Thus the notion of ‘adiaphora’ is brought back into its close relationship with that of ‘subsidiarity’, the principle that matters in the Church should be decided as close to the local level as possible.⁵³ A distinction is drawn between trivial issues about which nobody would dream of consulting the great councils of the Communion, and more serious matters which no local church has the right to tamper with on its own. The two notions of ‘adiaphora’ and ‘subsidiarity’ work together like this: the clearer it is that something is ‘indifferent’ in terms of the Church’s central doctrine and ethics, the closer to the local level it can be decided; whereas the clearer it is that something is central, the wider must be the circle of consultation. Once again, this poses the question: how does one know, and who decides, where on this sliding scale a particular issue belongs? In many cases an obvious *prima facie* case exists of sufficient controversy, both locally and across the Communion, to justify, if only for the reasons in the previous paragraph, reference to the wider diocese or province, or even to the whole Communion.
95. Not least because of the recurring questions about ‘who decides’ in these matters, the twin notions of ‘adiaphora’ and ‘subsidiarity’ need to be triangulated with the questions of authority, and particularly the authority of scripture on the one hand and of decision-makers in the Church on the other. This brings us back from consideration of the nature of diversity within communion to the bonds of unity which hold that communion together, and so to complete the circle of this account of what our communion actually is and how it functions and flourishes as it seeks to serve the mission of God in the world.

⁵³ See above in paragraphs 38-39, 77 and 83.

96. Having offered a description of both the nature of the problems that confront us in the Anglican Communion and the theological principles within which they must be addressed, we turn our attention to the future. In what direction is God now calling us as the Anglican Communion as we seek to fulfil our mission and, through our unity and communion, live out the gospel of Jesus for the sake of the world's redemption?

Section C : Our Future Life Together

The Instruments of Unity

97. One matter that has struck us forcefully is the way in which the views of the Instruments of Unity have been ignored or sidelined by sections of the Communion. This has led the Commission to revisit the question of authority of the Instruments of Unity and their inter-relationship and we will make recommendations later in this report. *The Virginia Report* spoke of Anglicanism's core structures as "a complex and still-evolving network" of authority.⁵⁴ In many ways, such dispersed authority is a great strength, but in relation to the issues that have recently confronted the Communion, its inherent weakness has been illustrated only too clearly.
98. Very early on in the life of the emerging Anglican Churches, it became clear that there would need to be mechanisms by which the Churches could take common counsel. These have become the core structures of the Anglican Communion, together known as the Instruments of Unity. When we speak of the 'Instruments of Unity', we are referring (in historical order) to:
- ◆ The Archbishop of Canterbury
 - ◆ The Lambeth Conference
 - ◆ The Anglican Consultative Council
 - ◆ The Primates' Meeting.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

99. From the beginning, the Archbishop of Canterbury, both in his person and his office, has been the pivotal instrument and focus of unity; and relationship to him became a touchstone of what it was to be Anglican.⁵⁵ It was to the Archbishop of Canterbury that American Anglicans first turned to seek consecration of new bishops after the American War of Independence.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See *The Virginia Report*, ch.3, p.42.

⁵⁵ Thomas Cranmer, as the first Archbishop of the Reformation period and author of the first *Book of Common Prayer*, set the tone and provided the model for his successors as *primus inter pares*; the primacy within both the Church of England and within the wider Communion has always been essentially a "primacy of honour".

⁵⁶ Although Archbishop Moore declined to consecrate Samuel Seabury himself for legal and political reasons, he considered Seabury's consecration by the Scottish Anglican Bishops in 1784 to be valid. Meanwhile, he pursued his own discussions with the English Government, enabling him to consecrate William White and Samuel Provoost as soon as the law had been changed in 1786. The story is helpfully described in PM Doll *Revolution, Religion and National Identity* (London 2000), ch.6.

Thereafter it was successive Archbishops of Canterbury who consecrated bishops for Canada, the West Indies, India and the developing English colonial territories, and it was to Archbishops of Canterbury that these churches tended to turn for assistance both in spiritual and political matters when problems arose.⁵⁷

The Lambeth Conference

100. It was a natural development from this that the Archbishop of Canterbury should be the person to call the bishops of the Anglican Communion together to take counsel. Although the first Lambeth Conference was called amidst considerable controversy and resistance as to its significance,⁵⁸ its inception was very much the brainchild of Archbishop C T Longley.⁵⁹ The question of controversial teaching by a bishop of the emerging South African Church, William Colenso, the Bishop of Natal, was manoeuvred on to the agenda by pressure from participating bishops; in some ways, this was to be a foretaste of what would follow in international gatherings of Anglicans, when controversial topics arise.⁶⁰ Intercommunion was at the heart of its concerns:⁶¹ perhaps unsurprisingly, its resolutions prefigure many of the issues which would recur (over a range of topics, decade by decade) in the succeeding century and a half.⁶²
101. Given the understanding of the episcopal office within Anglicanism (see paragraphs 63-66 above), the Conference seemed the appropriate body to express a view on issues of doctrinal purity and orthodoxy. Prompted by the Colenso affair, it suggested that "... a committee [of bishops] be instructed to consider the constitution of a voluntary spiritual tribunal, to which questions of doctrine might be carried by appeal ..."⁶³
102. It had been a precondition of its calling that the Conference should not regard itself as a pan-Anglican Synod, with legislative powers, but rather as an

⁵⁷ For a readable account of the developing Communion, see W.M. Jacob, *The Making of the Anglican Church Worldwide*, SPCK (1997). The earlier role of the Bishop of London (which had developed from the commercial expansion of the chartered companies of the City of London, and the work of their chaplains) was almost entirely eclipsed by the early nineteenth century.

⁵⁸ See AMG Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference*, SPCK (1967) especially ch.10; the Archbishop of York was the most prominent among those bishops who refused the summons to the 1867 Conference (for reasons based partly on Church-State issues, relating to questions about the status of the Conference as a "General Council", in contravention of Article XXI).

⁵⁹ "It is remarkable to observe how Longley managed to be present at each of the events which proved to be milestones in the early history of 'pan-Anglicanism'" (p. 91). Stephenson contrasts Longley's 'pan-Anglicanism' with his predecessors' 'pan-Protestantism' (the latter could be illustrated by the passage some years earlier of the Jerusalem Bishopric Act 1841).

⁶⁰ For the full story, see Stephenson *op cit* chapter 11.

⁶¹ 'Intercommunion' issues took up approximately half of the time the bishops spent together (see Stephenson, *op cit* ch.12).

⁶² Their Resolutions covered the process of episcopal appointment, establishment of new sees, intercommunion, synodical authority, and doctrinal and geographical boundaries ; for the full text of these and other resolutions up to 1988, see R Coleman, *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867-1988* (Toronto, 1992).

⁶³ Lambeth Conference 1867, Resolution 9.

advisory body;⁶⁴ though in the event it emphasised that “unity in faith and discipline will be best maintained among the several branches of the Anglican Communion by due and canonical subordination of the synods of the several branches to the higher authority of a synod or synods above them”.⁶⁵ Whatever its intended significance, as Owen Chadwick has noted, “Meetings start to gather authority if they exist and are seen not to be a cloud of hot air and rhetoric. It was impossible that the leaders of the Anglican Communion should meet every ten years and not start to gather respect; and to gather respect is slowly to gather influence, and influence is on the road to authority”.⁶⁶ From its inception, the Lambeth Conference has proved to be a powerful vehicle for the expression of a concept central to Anglican ecclesiology, the collegiality of the bishops.

The Anglican Consultative Council

103. The first Lambeth Conference was called before the advent of widespread lay participation in formal synodical government. The 1867 Conference had set up various committees, to undergird the work the bishops had begun. In 1897, it resolved to establish a permanent consultative body.⁶⁷ It developed over the years,⁶⁸ coming to fruition with the final establishment in 1968 of the Anglican Consultative Council. The Anglican Consultative Council was to give a voice to lay people who were now fully participating in the governance of their provinces across the world; although the Council, like the Lambeth Conference, has always disavowed any intention to develop a more formal synodical status.⁶⁹

The Primates’ Meeting

104. Finally, in 1978, the Lambeth Conference called upon the Archbishop of Canterbury to work with all the primates of the Anglican Communion “to initiate consideration of the way to relate together the international conferences, councils and meetings within the Anglican Communion so that the Anglican Communion may best serve God within the context of one, holy, catholic and apostolic church”.⁷⁰ Archbishop Coggan advocated “meetings of the Primates of the Communion reasonably often, for leisurely thought, prayer and deep

⁶⁴ In his letter of invitation, Longley had made clear (anticipating the Archbishop of York’s misgivings) that “Such a Meeting would not be competent to make declarations, or lay down definitions on points of doctrine...” (See Stephenson, *op cit* p 188).

⁶⁵ Lambeth Conference 1867, Resolution 4. The meaning and intention of this statement have been the subject of continuing debates, up to the present.

⁶⁶ O Chadwick, Introduction, in *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867-1988*, ed, R Coleman, (Toronto 1992), p.xvii.

⁶⁷ Lambeth Conference 1897, Resolution 5.

⁶⁸ See Lambeth Conference 1908, Resolution 54, which defines the membership of the Consultative body, and Lambeth Conference 1920, Resolution 44, which makes clear that it is “a purely advisory body ... and neither possesses nor claims any executive or administrative power; see also Lambeth Conference 1930, Resolution 50, Lambeth Conference 1948, Resolutions 80 and 81, and Lambeth Conference 1958, Resolution 61.

⁶⁹ Its Constitution defines its object as (*inter alia*) “...to advise on inter-Anglican, provincial and diocesan relationships...” (see Constitution Article 2(c), in *The Communion We Share* (Harrisburg, PA, 2000, p.23).

⁷⁰ Lambeth Conference 1978, Resolution 12.

consultation ... perhaps as frequently as once in two years".⁷¹ Recently, this has been increased on occasions to intervals of less than a year. The meetings have not always been leisurely, and they may not always have lived up to Archbishop Coggan's other aspirations. Like the other Instruments of Unity, however, the Primates' Meeting has refused to acknowledge anything more than a consultative and advisory authority. In part, it is the task of the present Commission to consider proposals made at the Lambeth Conferences in 1988 and 1998,⁷² and reiterated in *To Mend the Net*,⁷³ for the primates to have an "enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters".⁷⁴

Recommendations on the Instruments of Unity

105. We have concluded that there needs to be a clearer understanding of the expectations placed on provinces in responding to the decisions of these Instruments. We do not favour the accumulation of formal power by the Instruments of Unity, or the establishment of any kind of central 'curia' for the Communion. However, we do believe that there are several ways in which the nature of the moral authority of the Instruments of Unity could be more clearly articulated. The terminology we use to describe these 'Instruments of Unity' suggests that their primary purpose lies elsewhere; neither the concept nor the goal of 'unity' is made explicit, and it thus appears that they are not inter-related at all. We have a 'Council' which is 'consultative', a 'Conference' which meets once a decade, a 'Meeting' which has no prescribed timetable, and an 'Archbishop'. We recommend that the Archbishop of Canterbury be regarded as the focus of unity and that the Primates' Meeting, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and possibly others, be regarded more appropriately as the Instruments of Communion.
106. Further work is necessary on the relationship between those Instruments of Unity. At the moment, there is no clear demarcation indicating which responsibilities fall to which instrument; this is particularly true of the relationship between the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council. Which speaks with the more authoritative voice for worldwide Anglicanism? Should the Lambeth Conference, as the gathering of the chief pastors and teachers of the churches have a 'magisterium', a teaching authority of special status? Is the Anglican Consultative Council, as the sole instrument which has lay participation alongside ordained membership other than the episcopal order, and thus most closely resembles the synods and conventions of the provinces, more appropriately the body which can take something approaching binding decisions for the Communion? What is the relationship between the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meeting? When the Primates' Meeting began, it was envisaged as taking on certain responsibilities akin to a Standing Committee of the Lambeth Conference, providing the sort of

⁷¹ Lambeth Conference 1978, Report, p123.

⁷² Lambeth Conference 1988, Resolution 18.2(a), and Lambeth Conference 1998, Resolution III.6.

⁷³ Gomez, Drexel W & Sinclair, Maurice W, Ed. Carolton, TX: The Ekklesia Society, 2001.

⁷⁴ Commission's emphasis.

frequent meeting which would allow it to address emerging crises.⁷⁵ Has it, in fact, developed such an ‘enhanced responsibility’ as the Lambeth Conference and the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission have strongly recommended? It may be clearer if the ‘Primates’ Meeting’ became known as the ‘Primates’ Conference – the Lambeth Standing Committee’.

107. We are aware that engagement with structural questions concerning the Instruments of Unity may be thought to take us beyond our mandate and, in any event, would be matters for the Instruments themselves (and especially the Anglican Consultative Council) to address. However, we offer our own thoughts and suggestions on these matters in Appendix One.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

108. The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in relation to each of the other Instruments of Unity is pivotal. The Archbishop convenes both the Lambeth Conference and the Primates’ Meeting, and is *ex officio* the President of the Anglican Consultative Council. This places the Archbishop at the centre of each of the Instruments, and as the one factor common to all. If the Archbishop is to be enabled to play a critical role at the heart of the Communion, there are obvious implications for those who establish priorities in terms of the international ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He must be free to exercise his role fully in each of the Instruments of Unity.
109. The Commission believes therefore that the historic position of the Archbishopric of Canterbury must not be regarded as a figurehead, but as the central focus of both unity and mission within the Communion. This office has a very significant teaching role. As *the* significant focus of unity, mission and teaching, the Communion looks to the office of the Archbishop to articulate the mind of the Communion especially in areas of controversy. The Communion should be able to look to the holder of this office to speak directly to any provincial situation on behalf of the Communion where this is deemed advisable. Such action should not be viewed as outside interference in the exercise of autonomy by any province. It is, in the view of the Commission, important to accept that the Archbishop of Canterbury is acting within the historic significance of his position when he speaks as a brother to the members of all member churches of the Anglican Communion, and as one who participates fully in their life and witness.
110. Furthermore, it has been noted that the Archbishop of Canterbury convenes the Lambeth Conference and the Primates’ Meeting, and they are both dependent for their existence on his behest. We recommend that this dependence on the See of Canterbury remain, and indeed, that it be enhanced. At present, there is some lack of clarity about the level of discretion that the Archbishop has with respect to invitations to the Lambeth Conference and to the Primates’ Meeting. This Commission is of the opinion that the Archbishop has the right to call or not to call to these gatherings whomsoever he believes is appropriate, in order to safeguard, and take counsel for, the well-being of the Anglican Communion.

⁷⁵ See Lambeth Conference 1978, Resolution 11.

The Commission believes that in the exercise of this right the Archbishop of Canterbury should invite participants to the Lambeth Conference on restricted terms at his sole discretion if circumstances exist where full voting membership of the Conference is perceived to be an undesirable status, or would militate against the greater unity of the Communion.

A Council of Advice

111. The Archbishop of Canterbury has a further distinction in relation to the Instruments of Unity, in that he alone is an individual, and not conciliar in nature. This can be a disadvantage when seeking clarity about the occasions when he might have authority to take an initiative in attempting to exercise authority on behalf of the entire Communion. Therefore, the way in which this ministry is supported by the Communion is of the utmost importance. The Commission concludes that the establishment of a Council of Advice would considerably enhance the foundations of any authority on which the Archbishop might feel truly enabled to act. In addition, the relationship between the Archbishop and the Secretariat of the Anglican Consultative Council must be reconsidered.
112. In order to perform the role which we have set out for the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop should be supported by appropriate mechanisms to ensure that he does not feel exposed and left to act entirely alone, but in a way which is informed by suitable persons, who would possess a knowledge of the life of the Communion, and of the theological, ecclesiological and canonical considerations which might apply to any given situation. We therefore recommend the establishment of a Council of Advice to the Archbishop to assist him in discerning when and how it might be appropriate for him to exercise a ministry of unity on behalf of the whole Communion. Such a body might be formed from any existing council of the Communion, possibly the Joint Standing Committees of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting, or a smaller advisory council drawn from the membership of these bodies. However, it will need to be constituted with specific reference to the sorts of expertise upon which the Archbishop of Canterbury may wish to draw in the development of this particular ministry. This may mean that it is preferable to consider a small group of advisers brought together to fulfil this specific role, drawing on the primates of the Communion, and also on the specific expertise understood to be required.

Canon Law and Covenant

113. Recent years have seen a revival of interest in, and the academic study of, the Canon Law of Anglican churches (their constitutions, canons and other regulatory instruments). In particular, the Primates' Meeting at Kanuga 2001 considered acknowledgement of the existence of an unwritten *ius commune* of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and initiated a process leading to the Anglican Communion Legal Advisers' Consultation in Canterbury (March 2002). The Consultation concluded: there are principles of canon law common to the churches within the Anglican Communion; their existence can be factually established; each province or church contributes through its own legal

system to the principles of canon law common within the Communion; these principles have a strong persuasive authority and are fundamental to the self-understanding of each of the churches of the Communion; these principles have a living force, and contain in themselves the possibility of further development; and the existence of these principles both demonstrates unity and promotes unity within the Anglican Communion.

114. At their meeting in Canterbury, April 2002, “[t]he Primates recognised that the unwritten law common to the Churches of the Communion and expressed as shared principles of canon law may be understood to constitute a fifth ‘instrument of unity’...to provide a basic framework to sustain the minimal conditions which allow the Churches of the Communion to live together in harmony and unity”.⁷⁶ On the primates’ recommendation, the Anglican Consultative Council (Hong Kong, September 2002) approved the establishment of the Anglican Communion Legal Advisers’ Network “to produce a statement of the principles of canon law common to the churches, and to examine shared problems and possible solutions”.⁷⁷ In October 2003, the primates urged the Network ‘to bring to completion’ this work.⁷⁸ This Commission fully endorses this and strongly recommends completion of the Statement of Principles of Canon Law as soon as possible, and is glad to learn of a Network meeting planned for the end of 2004.

115. The primates at Kanuga 2001 also considered the following propositions:

- ◆ The principles about communion, autonomy, discernment in communion and inter-Anglican relations, enunciated at global level by the Instruments of Unity, have persuasive moral authority for individual churches; they do not have enforceable juridical authority unless incorporated in their legal systems (and generally they are not incorporated).
- ◆ This may be contrasted with the juridical experience of the particular church, in which enforceable canon law, the servant of the church, seeks to facilitate and order communion amongst its faithful.
- ◆ The canon law of each church should reflect and promote global communion.

116. At present individual canonical systems are ambivalent to global communion, rarely centripetal (looking outward), mostly neutral (internal), and sometimes centrifugal (keeping other provinces at a distance). No church has a systematic body of ‘communion law’ dealing with its relationship of communion with other member churches. Surprisingly, then, inter-Anglican relations are not a distinctive feature of provincial laws. This may be contrasted with the increasing bodies of ecumenical law in Anglican churches facilitating communion relations between Anglicans and non-Anglicans.

⁷⁶ Report of the Meeting of Primates of the Anglican Communion, International Study Centre, Canterbury, 10-17 April 2002

⁷⁷ The Network maintains a website: www.acclawnet.co.uk.

⁷⁸ See Appendix Three/10.

117. This Commission recommends, therefore, consideration as to how to make the principles of inter-Anglican relations more effective at the local ecclesial level. This has been a persistent problem in Anglicanism contributing directly to the current crisis, and could be remedied by the adoption by each church of its own simple and short domestic ‘communion law’, to enable and implement the covenant proposal below, strengthening the bonds of unity and articulating what has to-date been assumed. Our opinion is that, as some matters in each church are serious enough for each church currently to have law on those matters - too serious to let the matter be the subject of an informal agreement or mere unenforceable guidance - so too with global communion affairs. The Commission considers that a brief law would be preferable to and more feasible than incorporation by each church of an elaborate and all-embracing canon defining inter-Anglican relations, which the Commission rejected in the light of the lengthy and almost impossible difficulty of steering such a canon unscathed through the legislative processes of forty-four churches, as well as the possibility of unilateral alteration of such a law.
118. This Commission recommends, therefore, and urges the primates to consider, the adoption by the churches of the Communion of a common Anglican Covenant which would make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the churches of the Communion. The Covenant could deal with: the acknowledgement of common identity; the relationships of communion; the commitments of communion; the exercise of autonomy in communion; and the management of communion affairs (including disputes). *A possible draft appears in Appendix Two.* We emphasise that this is only a preliminary draft and discussion document, and at this stage it would be premature for any church to adopt it. To the extent that this is largely descriptive of existing principles, it is hoped that its adoption might be regarded as relatively uncontroversial. The Covenant could be signed by the primates. Of itself, however, it would have no binding authority. Therefore the brief ‘communion law’ referred to above (paragraph 117) might authorise its primate (or equivalent) to sign the Covenant on behalf of that church and commit the church to adhere to the terms of the Covenant.⁷⁹ As it is imperative for the Communion itself to own and be responsible for the Covenant, we suggest the following long-term process, in an educative context, be considered for real debate and agreement on its adoption as a solemn witness to communion:
- ◆ discussion and approval of a first draft by the primates
 - ◆ submission to the member churches and the Anglican Consultative Council for consultation and reception
 - ◆ final approval by the primates
 - ◆ legal authorisation by each church for signing, and
 - ◆ a solemn signing by the primates in a liturgical context.

⁷⁹ Suggested form of law, for example: ‘The Governing Body of the Church in Wales authorises the Archbishop of Wales to enter on behalf of this church the Anglican Covenant and commits the Church in Wales to comply and act in a manner compatible with the Covenant so entered’.

119. This Commission believes that the case for adoption of an Anglican Covenant is overwhelming:

- ◆ The Anglican Communion cannot again afford, in every sense, the crippling prospect of repeated worldwide inter-Anglican conflict such as that engendered by the current crisis. Given the imperfections of our communion and human nature, doubtless there will be more disagreements. It is our shared responsibility to have in place an agreed mechanism to enable and maintain life in communion, and to prevent and manage communion disputes.
- ◆ The concept of the adoption of a covenant is not new in the ecumenical context. Anglican churches have commonly entered covenants with other churches to articulate their relationships of communion. These ecumenical covenants provide very appropriate models from which Anglicans can learn much in their own development of inter-Anglican relations.
- ◆ Adoption of a Covenant is a practical need and a theological challenge, and we recognise the process may lead to complex debate. A Covenant incarnates communion as a visible foundation around which Anglicans can gather to shape and protect their distinctive identity and mission, and in so doing also provides an accessible resource for our ecumenical partners in their understanding of Anglicanism.
- ◆ The solemn act of entering a Covenant carries the weight of an international obligation so that, in the event of a church changing its mind about the covenantal commitments, that church could not proceed internally and unilaterally. The process becomes public and multilateral, whereas unilateralism would involve breach of obligations owed to forty-three other churches. The formality of ratification by the primates publicly assembled also affords a unique opportunity for worldwide witness.
- ◆ A worldwide Anglican Covenant may also assist churches in their relations with the States in which they exist. At such moments when a church faces pressure from its host State(s) to adopt secular state standards in its ecclesial life and practice, an international Anglican Covenant might provide powerful support to the church, in a dispute with the State, to reinforce and underpin its religious liberty within the State.
- ◆ As with any relational document of outstanding historical importance, which symbolises the trust parties have in each other, some provisions of a Covenant will be susceptible to development through interpretation and practice: it cannot predict the impact of future events. For this reason the draft Covenant is designed to allow the parties to it to adjust that relationship and resolve disputes in the light of changing circumstances.

120. Whilst the paramount model must remain that of the voluntary association of churches bound together in their love of the Lord of the Church, in their discipleship and in their common inheritance, it may be that the Anglican Consultative Council could encourage full participation in the Covenant project by each church by constructing an understanding of communion membership

which is expressed by the readiness of a province to maintain its bonds with Canterbury, and which includes a reference to the Covenant.

Section D : The Maintenance of Communion

General findings

121. The Communion has affirmed the importance of interdependence on very many occasions. The question that has been raised in relation to both the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada is that in relation to matters of real and acknowledged importance to them, they have not attached sufficient importance to the impact of their decisions on other parts of the Communion. This in turn has prompted reactions from other provinces and individual primates which offend our understanding of communion in significant ways.
122. The Commission has given long and careful consideration to the submissions made to it about the Episcopal Church (USA), the Diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of Canada, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, and about various primates who (without consultation with their fellow primates) have accommodated clergy who are at odds with their own bishops. We cannot avoid the conclusion that all have acted in ways incompatible with the Communion principle of interdependence, and our fellowship together has suffered immensely as a result of these developments. Furthermore, we deeply regret that the appeals of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the primates and of this Commission for a period of “calm” to allow the Commission to complete its report have been ignored in a number of quarters, and that a number of primates and provinces have declared themselves in impaired or broken communion with the Episcopal Church (USA) or the Diocese of New Westminster.
123. The Commission regrets that without attaching sufficient importance to the interests of the wider Communion:
- ◆ the Episcopal Church (USA) proceeded with the consecration of Gene Robinson
 - ◆ the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) declared that “local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions”⁸⁰
 - ◆ the Diocese of New Westminster approved the use of public Rites for the Blessing of same sex unions
 - ◆ the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada issued a statement affirming the integrity and sanctity of committed same sex relationships

⁸⁰ General Convention 2003, Resolution C051 (see Appendix Three/9).

- ◆ a number of primates and other bishops have taken it upon themselves to intervene in the affairs of other provinces of the Communion.

Our unanimous recommendations in relation to these matters are set out below.

On elections to the episcopate

124. Anglicanism has always maintained that a bishop is more than simply the chief pastor to a local church. Bishops are consecrated into an order of ministry in the worldwide Church of God. They represent the universal to the local, and the local to the universal.⁸¹ Their acceptability to the wider Church is signified through ‘confirmation of election’ undertaken by the metropolitan bishop in consultation with the other bishops of the province.⁸² In modern Anglican polity, provision is made for this confirmation in the constitutions of the provinces in a variety of ways, often involving synodical processes.⁸³ In the Episcopal Church (USA), such confirmation is undertaken by the consents of Diocesan Standing Committees and bishops with jurisdiction, or by General Convention.⁸⁴
125. There are some areas in which the issue of acceptability is unclear. For example, practice varies across the Communion in relation to divorce and remarriage: there are provinces where it would be unthinkable to appoint a bishop who had been divorced and remarried; there are others where this would be regarded as a secondary issue. The fact of divorce and remarriage would therefore not seem *per se* to be a crucial criterion.⁸⁵
126. There are some matters over which the Communion has expressed its mind. As we have seen,⁸⁶ the contentious issue of ordaining women as bishops was the subject of extensive debate and discussion in the Communion for some considerable time before a common mind was reached. After lengthy deliberation, the Instruments of Unity concluded that although the ministry of a

⁸¹ “... a Bishop’s ministry is ‘representative’ in several different senses. A Bishop represents the local church to the wider, but also the other way round. Bishops represent Christ to the people, but also bring the people and their prayers to God. Finally, they often represent God and his Church in the world at large.” Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, ‘Towards a theology of choosing bishops’ in *Working with the Spirit: Choosing diocesan bishops* CHP (London 2001), p.107. See also, *The Gift of Sexuality: A theological perspective*, Report of the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, offered for study and reflection by the House of Bishops, 18 March 2003, paragraph 7.1, <http://arc.episcopalchurch.org/presiding-bishop/pdf/theologycomreport.pdf>.

⁸² A helpful recent summary of the process (by reference to the Church of England) may be found in *Working with the Spirit: Choosing diocesan bishops*, CHP (London, 2001).

⁸³ See N Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion* (Oxford 1998), pp.109-113.

⁸⁴ Because General Convention meets on a three-yearly cycle, if a bishop is elected more than three months before its next meeting, confirmation is dealt with by consent of a majority of the Standing Committees of the dioceses of the Episcopal Church (see ECUSA *Constitution and Canons*, Title III, Canon 21).

⁸⁵ There are Lambeth Conference resolutions on the subject of divorce and remarriage, but not relating to the issue of the ordination of divorcees.

⁸⁶ See above paragraphs 12-21.

woman as bishop might not be accepted in some provinces, that represented a degree of impairment which the Communion could bear.⁸⁷

127. The Communion has also made its collective position clear on the issue of ordaining those who are involved in same gender unions;⁸⁸ and this has been reiterated by the primates through their endorsement of the 1998 Lambeth Conference resolution.⁸⁹ By electing and confirming such a candidate in the face of the concerns expressed by the wider Communion, the Episcopal Church (USA) has caused deep offence to many faithful Anglican Christians both in its own church and in other parts of the Communion.
128. We do not believe that those involved in the election of a bishop to the See of New Hampshire and the consent to the election are entirely or exclusively blameworthy in relation to this: not everyone involved in the processes will necessarily have been fully acquainted with the contents of the resolutions we have quoted. Since there is no doubt that in terms of its constitutional proprieties, the Episcopal Church (USA) was at liberty to take the steps that it did,⁹⁰ it will not have been straightforward for those involved to weigh up the criteria that they should apply. It seems to us that this reinforces the need for much greater awareness around the Communion of the views expressed by the Instruments of Unity, and of the impact of decisions taken in one church upon another.
129. However, it remains true that bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA) subsequent to the Primates' Meeting in October 2003 must be taken to have acted in the full knowledge that very many people in the Anglican Communion could neither recognise nor receive the ministry as a bishop in the Church of God of a person in an openly acknowledged same gender union. This inevitably raises the question of their commitment to the Episcopal Church (USA)'s interdependence as a member of the Anglican Communion to which its own Constitution and Canons makes reference.⁹¹
130. In terms of the wider Communion, and our wider relationships with a number of key ecumenical partners, the consecration has had very prejudicial consequences. In our view, those involved did not pay due regard, in the way they might and, in our view, should have done, to the wider implications of the decisions they were making and the actions they were taking. We believe that there is an important lesson here, which has implications for the process of appointment and election throughout the whole Communion.

⁸⁷ See *Women in the Anglican Episcopate: theology guidelines and practice*, The Eames Commission and the Monitoring Group Reports, IV:57 (Toronto, 1998).

⁸⁸ See Lambeth Conference 1998, Resolution 1.10, reproduced in Appendix Three/6.

⁸⁹ See the Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in Lambeth Palace, 16 October 2003 (included in Appendix Three/10).

⁹⁰ We do not agree with the argument put to us in one submission, that the consecration was invalid since it was lacking in appropriate intention (see 'The current crisis in the Anglican Communion: What are the ecclesiological issues involved?', reproduced at: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenical/commissions/lambeth/documents/200406dgecclesiology.pdf>

⁹¹ The Preamble to the ECUSA *Constitution and Canons* characterises the Church as "...a constituent member of the Anglican Communion..."

131. In our view, all those involved in the processes of episcopal appointment, at whichever level, should in future in the light of all that has happened pay proper regard to the acceptability of the candidate to other provinces in our Communion; the issue should be addressed by those locally concerned at the earliest stages, by those provincially involved in the confirmation of any election, and not least by those who, acting on those decisions, consecrate the individual into the order of bishop. The question of acceptability could be posed in a number of ways. Is there any reason to expect that the appointment or election of a particular candidate might prejudice our relations with other provinces? Would the ministry of this individual be recognised and received if he or she were to visit another province? Would the individual be ‘translatable’?⁹²
132. The Commission does not believe it necessary to introduce any new tier of formal process, or forum in which these questions should be addressed, but we take seriously the question of acceptability, and would want to emphasise that it goes far beyond the question of homosexuality. What is needed is a change of outlook on the part of those involved in the process of appointment to take account of our bonds of affection and interdependence.
133. We accept and respect the position taken up by the Archbishop of Canterbury in relation to the current incumbent of the See of New Hampshire.⁹³ In view of the widespread unacceptability of his ministry in other provinces of the Communion, we urge the proposed Council of Advice to keep the matter of his acceptability under close review. We also urge the Archbishop, unless and until the Council of Advice (or, if the Council should not come into being, the Primates’ Meeting) indicate to the contrary, to exercise very considerable caution in inviting or admitting him to the councils of the Communion.
134. Mindful of the hurt and offence that have resulted from recent events, and yet also of the imperatives of communion - the repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation enjoined on us by Christ - we have debated long and hard how all sides may be brought together. We recommend that:
- ◆ the Episcopal Church (USA) be invited to express its regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached in the events surrounding the election and consecration of a bishop for the See of New Hampshire, and for the consequences which followed, and that such an expression of regret would represent the desire of the Episcopal Church (USA) to remain within the Communion
 - ◆ pending such expression of regret, those who took part as consecrators of Gene Robinson should be invited to consider in all conscience whether they should withdraw themselves from representative functions in the Anglican

⁹² See above paragraphs 12-21 and 126 for the reasons why exceptional arrangements apply to women bishops.

⁹³ At the press conference on 16 October 2003 which followed the Primates’ Meeting, the Archbishop of Canterbury said, in answer to a question, “It is also a fact that because of the present discipline of the Church of England, Gene Robinson would not be in a position to be received as a bishop here – to be licensed to exercise episcopal functions here.”

Communion. We urge this in order to create the space necessary to enable the healing of the Communion. We advise that in the formation of their consciences, those involved consider the common good of the Anglican Communion, and seek advice through their primate and the Archbishop of Canterbury. We urge all members of the Communion to accord appropriate respect to such conscientious decisions

- ◆ the Episcopal Church (USA) be invited to effect a moratorium on the election and consent to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in a same gender union until some new consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges.

135. Finally, we recommend that the Instruments of Unity, through the Joint Standing Committee, find practical ways in which the ‘listening’ process commended by the Lambeth Conference in 1998 may be taken forward, so that greater common understanding might be obtained on the underlying issue of same gender relationships. We particularly request a contribution from the Episcopal Church (USA) which explains, from within the sources of authority that we as Anglicans have received in scripture, the apostolic tradition and reasoned reflection, how a person living in a same gender union may be considered eligible to lead the flock of Christ. As we see it, such a reasoned response, following up the work of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA), and taken with recent work undertaken by the Church of England⁹⁴ and other provinces of the Communion, will have an important contribution to make to the ongoing discussion.

On public Rites of Blessing of same sex unions

136. Recent developments within the Diocese of New Westminster and the Episcopal Church (USA), which both took synodical action to authorise public Rites for the Blessing of same sex unions, are one of the presenting causes for the current tensions within the Anglican Communion, and thus it is part of the mandate of the Lambeth Commission to address this issue.

137. The synod of the diocese of New Westminster in 1998 approved a resolution to develop a public Rite for the Blessing of same sex unions. The diocesan bishop withheld his consent. In 1999, the bishop commissioned theological and canonical evaluations of the proposal, and these reports were all available on the diocesan website, but there is no record of any formal attempt to consult the wider province or Communion on the theological issues, or to delay processes to allow such consultation to take place, beyond participation in an emergency debate at ACC-12 in Hong Kong in September 2002.⁹⁵ Indeed, despite the statement of the Lambeth Conference in 1998 that it could not “advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions”, the conclusions of the Cadman Report was that this was not a matter of theology but of pastoral care, and competent of resolution at the diocesan level.⁹⁶ The Task Force on Jurisdiction,

⁹⁴ See *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* (London, 2003)

⁹⁵ The resolution is reproduced in Appendix Three/8.

⁹⁶ *Diocese of New Westminster Dialogue on Same Sex Unions*, Report of the Legal

which was established by the Canadian General Synod at the request of the House of Bishops, concluded in 2003 that “when jurisdiction in a contentious matter is not specified, it will be decided at the highest level that has the will to decide it”.⁹⁷ After withholding consent to the synodical resolution again in 2001, the bishop did give consent when it was approved for the third time in 2002. The first such public Rite was held in 2003, a few days after the meeting of the primates in Gramado.

138. Without commenting on the constitutional propriety of steps that have been taken, we would want to observe that normally in the churches of the Communion there is not unqualified freedom on the part of any bishop or diocese to authorise liturgical texts if they are likely to be inconsistent with the norms of liturgical and doctrinal usage extant in the province’s *Book of Common Prayer* or other provincially authorised texts.

139. In the Canadian church, a process of discernment is underway to ascertain to what extent the blessing of same sex unions is a doctrinal matter, thus requiring, constitutionally, decisions at least at the national level. At its meeting in June 2004, the Canadian General Synod referred the question of whether or not the matter of same sex blessings is a matter of doctrine to the Canadian Primate’s Theological Commission, whose report will be considered throughout the church before the question returns to the General Synod meeting of 2007. The Canadian General Synod in June also adopted as part of a larger resolution that it affirmed “the integrity and sanctity of committed same sex relationships”. While this statement has been viewed by some as a change of teaching on the part of the Anglican Church of Canada, the reference to the Theological Commission includes a review of the theology behind this statement and thus the main thrust of action by the General Synod is to defer decisions until 2007 until due consultation can take place.⁹⁸

140. Within the Episcopal Church (USA), the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops concluded as late as March 2003, that

“Because at this time we are nowhere near consensus in the Church regarding the blessing of homosexual relationships, we cannot recommend authorizing the development of new rites for such blessings. For these reasons, we urge the greatest caution as the Church continues to seek the mind of Christ in these matters.”⁹⁹

but in August of that year, the 74th General Convention commended the development of public Rites of Blessing for same sex unions as being within the

and Canonical Commission, by George E H Cadman, QC (Chair), Linda Barry-Hollowell (Diocese of Calgary), Stephen J Toope (Diocese of Montreal), April 2001.

⁹⁷ *In Service of Communion*, Final Report of the General Synod Task Force on Jurisdiction to the Council of General Synod and the Canadian House of Bishops, February 2002

⁹⁸ Resolution A134 *Blessing of Same Sex Unions* - reproduced in Appendix Three/12.

⁹⁹ *The Gift of Sexuality: A theological perspective*, Report of the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, offered for study and reflection by the House of Bishops, 18th March 2003, quotation from paragraphs 6.5 and 6.6 (see <http://arc.episcopalchurch.org/presiding-bishop/pdf/theologycomreport.pdf>).

bounds of the Episcopal Church (USA)'s common life (see above, paragraphs 27 and 123) without formal theological justification or consultation in the Communion.

141. The clear and repeated statements of the Instruments of Unity have also been to advise against the development and approval of such rites.¹⁰⁰ Whilst proponents of actions in the Diocese of New Westminster and the Episcopal Church (USA) may argue that such advice has only moral authority, we believe that it must be recognised that actions to move towards the authorisation of such rites in the face of opposition from the wider Anglican Communion constitutes a denial of the bonds of Communion. In order for these bonds to be properly acknowledged and addressed, the churches proposing to take action must be able, as a beginning, to demonstrate to the rest of the Communion why their proposal meets the criteria of scripture, tradition and reason. In order to be received as a legitimate development of the tradition, it must be possible to demonstrate how public Rites of Blessing for same sex unions would constitute growth in harmony with the apostolic tradition as it has been received.
142. Whilst there have been the beginnings of such demonstration, at present it would be true to say that very many people within the Communion fail to see how the authorisation of such a rite is compatible with the teaching of scripture, tradition and reason. In such circumstances, it should not be surprising that such developments are seen by some as surrendering to the spirit of the age rather than an authentic development of the gospel.
143. We believe that to proceed unilaterally with the authorisation of public Rites of Blessing for same sex unions at this time goes against the formally expressed opinions of the Instruments of Unity and therefore constitutes action in breach of the legitimate application of the Christian faith as the churches of the Anglican Communion have received it, and of bonds of affection in the life of the Communion, especially the principle of interdependence. For the sake of our common life, we call upon all bishops of the Anglican Communion to honour the Primates' Pastoral Letter of May 2003, by not proceeding to authorise public Rites of Blessing for same sex unions. The primates stated then:

“The question of public rites for the blessing of same sex unions is still a cause of potentially divisive controversy. The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke for us all when he said that it is through liturgy that we express what we believe, and that there is no theological consensus about same sex unions. Therefore, we as a body cannot support the authorisation of such rites.

This is distinct from the duty of pastoral care that is laid upon all Christians to respond with love and understanding to people of all sexual

¹⁰⁰ For example, Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution 1.10 *Human Sexuality*; the statements of the Primates' Meetings in March 2000, May 2003 (quoted in paragraph 142) and October 2003 (see Appendix Three/10), and, on procedure, ACC-12 Resolution 34 *Province-wide and Communion-wide consultation* (see Appendix Three/8).

orientations. As recognised in the booklet *True Union*,¹⁰¹ it is necessary to maintain a breadth of private response to situations of individual pastoral care.”

144. While we recognise that the Episcopal Church (USA) has by action of Convention made provision for the development of public Rites of Blessing of same sex unions, the decision to authorise rests with diocesan bishops. Because of the serious repercussions in the Communion, we call for a moratorium on all such public Rites, and recommend that bishops who have authorised such rites in the United States and Canada be invited to express regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached by such authorisation. Pending such expression of regret, we recommend that such bishops be invited to consider in all conscience whether they should withdraw themselves from representative functions in the Anglican Communion. We recommend that provinces take responsibility for endeavouring to ensure commitment on the part of their bishops to the common life of the Communion on this matter.
145. We urge all provinces that are engaged in processes of discernment regarding the blessing of same sex unions to engage the Communion in continuing study of biblical and theological rationale for and against such unions. Such a process of study and reflection needs to include clarification regarding the distinction, if such exists, between same sex unions and same sex marriage. This call for continuing study does not imply approval of such proposals.
146. We remind all in the Communion that Lambeth Resolution 1.10 calls for an ongoing process of listening and discernment, and that Christians of good will need to be prepared to engage honestly and frankly with each other on issues relating to human sexuality. It is vital that the Communion establish processes and structures to facilitate ongoing discussion. One of the deepest realities that the Communion faces is continuing difference on the presenting issue of ministry by and to persons who openly engage in sexually active homosexual relationships. Whilst this report criticises those who have propagated change without sufficient regard to the common life of the Communion, it has to be recognised that debate on this issue cannot be closed whilst sincerely but radically different positions continue to be held across the Communion. The later sections of Lambeth Resolution 1.10 cannot be ignored any more than the first section, as the primates have noted.¹⁰² Moreover, any demonising of homosexual persons, or their ill treatment, is totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care. We urge provinces to be pro-active in support of the call of Lambeth Resolution 64 (1988) for them to “reassess, in the light of ... study and because of our concern for human rights, its care for and attitude toward persons of homosexual orientation”.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *True Union in the Body?*, a paper commissioned by Archbishop Drexel Gomez, published privately and circulated at the Primates’ Meeting in May 2003.

¹⁰² Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in Lambeth Palace, 16 October 2003, reproduced in Appendix Three/10.

¹⁰³ The full resolution is included in Appendix Three/3.

On care of dissenting groups

147. The Commission has been made aware of the hurt and alienation felt by individual Anglicans, parishes and dioceses as a result of decisions made and actions taken by autonomous provinces within which there is profound disagreement. In some cases, there is a long history of suspicion and division over a range of issues, and the concern over homosexuality has merely provided the focus for reaction on the part of Anglican Christians whose motivation is to be faithful to Christian truth and values as they have understood them. But in all cases, this is a situation which cries out for healing and reconciliation.
148. In addressing this situation, the Commission recognises and wishes to uphold the importance and relevance of the historically sanctioned role of the bishop as a core principle of Anglican ecclesiology. Tensions are particularly acute when parishes or dioceses feel that the spiritual leadership of their church has been compromised.
149. In some instances, this breach of trust has been felt so keenly that a parish or diocese has found itself unwilling to accept the ministry of a bishop associated with such contrary action, and has invited bishops from elsewhere in the province or beyond to provide pastoral and sacramental oversight. In some cases, there are primates and bishops who have acceded to these requests with or without reference to the proper authorities of the diocese concerned. We want to make quite clear that we fully understand the principled concerns that have led to those actions even though we believe that they should have been handled differently.
150. In these circumstances we call upon the church or province in question to recognise first that dissenting groups in their midst are, like themselves, seeking to be faithful members of the Anglican family; and second, we call upon all the bishops concerned, both the 'home' bishops and the 'intervening' bishops as Christian leaders and pastors to work tirelessly to rebuild the trust which has been lost.
151. In only those situations where there has been an extreme breach of trust, and as a last resort, we commend a conditional and temporary provision of delegated pastoral oversight for those who are dissenting. This oversight must be sufficient to provide a credible degree of security on the part of the alienated community, so that they do not feel at the mercy of a potentially hostile leadership. While the temporary provision of pastoral oversight is in place there must also be a mutually agreed commitment to effecting reconciliation.
152. During this period it would be axiomatic that the incumbent bishop would delegate some of his or her functions, rights and responsibilities to the 'incoming' bishop. In this regard, we commend the proposals for delegated episcopal pastoral oversight set out by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA) in 2004.¹⁰⁴ We believe that these proposals are entirely

¹⁰⁴ *Caring for all the Churches: A response of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church to an expressed need of the Church*, March 2004, reproduced in Appendix Three/11.

reasonable, if they are approached and implemented reasonably by everyone concerned. We particularly commend the appeal structures set out in the House of Bishops' policy statement, and consider that these provide a very significant degree of security. We see no reason why such delegated pastoral and sacramental oversight should not be provided by retired bishops from within the province in question, and recommend that a province making provision in this manner should maintain a list of bishops who would be suitable and acceptable to undertake such a ministry. In principle, we see no difficulty in bishops from other provinces of the Communion becoming involved with the life of particular parishes under the terms of these arrangements in appropriate cases.

153. We are conscious that the Anglican Church of Canada is considering the adoption of a broadly similar scheme, and we ask that their proposals too should be marked by and received with a willingness to co-operate together in accordance with the principles we have outlined above.
154. The Anglican Communion upholds the ancient norm of the Church that all the Christians in one place should be united in their prayer, worship and the celebration of the sacraments. The Commission believes that all Anglicans should strive to live out this ideal. Whilst there are instances in the polity of Anglican churches that more than one jurisdiction exists in one place, this is something to be discouraged rather than propagated. We do not therefore favour the establishment of parallel jurisdictions.
155. We call upon those bishops who believe it is their conscientious duty to intervene in provinces, dioceses and parishes other than their own:
 - ◆ to express regret for the consequences of their actions
 - ◆ to affirm their desire to remain in the Communion, and
 - ◆ to effect a moratorium on any further interventions.

We also call upon these archbishops and bishops to seek an accommodation with the bishops of the dioceses whose parishes they have taken into their own care.

We further call upon those diocesan bishops of the Episcopal Church (USA) who have refused to countenance the proposals set out by their House of Bishops to reconsider their own stance on this matter. If they refuse to do so, in our view, they will be making a profoundly dismissive statement about their adherence to the polity of their own church.

Conclusion

156. We call upon all parties to the current dispute to seek ways of reconciliation, and to heal our divisions. We have already indicated (paragraphs 134 and 144) some ways in which the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Diocese of New Westminster could begin to speak with the Communion in a way which would foster reconciliation. We have appealed to those intervening in provinces and

dioceses similarly to act with renewed respect.¹⁰⁵ We would expect all provinces to respond with generosity and charity to any such actions. It may well be that there need to be formal discussions about the path to reconciliation, and a symbolic Act of Reconciliation, which would mark a new beginning for the Communion, and a common commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to a broken and needy world.

157. There remains a very real danger that we will not choose to walk together. Should the call to halt and find ways of continuing in our present communion not be heeded, then we shall have to begin to learn to walk apart. We would much rather not speculate on actions that might need to be taken if, after acceptance by the primates, our recommendations are not implemented. However, we note that there are, in any human dispute, courses that may be followed: processes of mediation and arbitration; non-invitation to relevant representative bodies and meetings; invitation, but to observer status only; and, as an absolute last resort, withdrawal from membership. We earnestly hope that none of these will prove necessary. Our aim throughout has been to work not for division but for healing and restoration. The real challenge of the gospel is whether we live deeply enough in the love of Christ, and care sufficiently for our joint work to bring that love to the world, that we will “make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4.3). As the primates stated in 2000, “to turn from one another would be to turn away from the Cross”, and indeed from serving the world which God loves and for which Jesus Christ died.

¹⁰⁵ See above, paragraph 155.