

# **Communion, Conflict and Hope**

The Kuala Lumpur Report of the third  
Inter-Anglican Theological and  
Doctrinal Commission

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## **FOREWORD: From the Chair of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission**

Illness prevented me from attending the final meeting of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC) but, while I very much regret that this was so, it does provide me with the opportunity to commend the work that my colleagues completed in Kuala Lumpur to a wider readership now.

When Archbishop George Carey appointed this Commission and asked me to chair its enquiry into what it is that nurtures or inhibits the common life of the Anglican Communion, I never anticipated the enrichment that would come from working with theologians from so many different parts of the Anglican world. It is widely recognised that for most of its history, members of the Anglican Communion from other parts of the world looked towards England for explanations of what it is that holds them in fellowship together. Yet those who travelled to London invariably associated most closely with the people, societies and missions through whom they had first been introduced to the Christian gospel. Such associations limited an awareness of the different types of biblical faith that were developing within the Communion as responses to the multifaceted and energising nature of that gospel message. Today, largely because of the easy access to travel and communication that we take for granted, the diversity of Anglican churches is prominently displayed - to the extent that for some observers they appear to be virtually incoherent as a world-wide Christian body. What this Commission has concluded, and what it expounds in its report, is that diversity has always been a characteristic of the church, and that part of the vocation of Anglicanism is to demonstrate how deeper unity is discovered by addressing disagreements together.

Of course readers who look for a document which will finally resolve all the controversies which preoccupy Christian people (and particularly the Anglican Communion) today will be disappointed. The only 'once and for all' language available to Christian theology has to do with the reconciling work of Christ. But what this report does offer to those who 'once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ' (Ephesians 2.13) is a framework within which they can confront their differences. As the title suggests, 'communion' provides the context in which conflicts can be resolved: it is not a consequence of agreements reached over disputed areas of faith and understanding. It is not the task of a theological commission to ratify or to undermine political or managerial arrangements that churches may reach in response to particular circumstances of their calling. What theologians can do

is highlight the tenacity of God's purposes, evidenced in scripture and history, to hold his people together in spite of their failings - and to direct them forward in hope, towards that plan 'for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth' (Ephesians 1.10).

I believe that this third report of IATDC contributes to this purpose. I hope therefore that it will be read, critically to be sure, but also with imagination. It offers a 'transferable' method of study by which individuals or groups, as well as whole churches and dioceses, can pursue their local concerns for unity in faith, ministry and vocation. It provides a vision of 'dynamic catholicity' which sees constant change and renewal as a necessary condition, not just a challenge to the church. And at key points the Christian scriptures are cited not as 'proof texts' to bolster points being made but as tokens of the promise and the fulfilment of God's faithfulness to his people throughout the ages. A critical and imaginative reading of this report may lead to a prayerful exploration of its implications. Such at least is my prayer as the life of this Commission draws to a close.

I would add one final thing. From the experience of working with this Commission, I have learned something which has also been immensely important to me during my recent illness, and that is the power of the simple words of Jesus, 'do not be anxious'. It is anxiety that sells newspapers - and is often a powerful lever for the manipulation of political change, including change within the church. But it is not the way of Christ. The sort of communion that this report anticipates is one that is grounded in the assurance of Christ's risen presence, which enables his people to live in love and peace with all, encouraging them to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

At this time then, I want to express my gratitude to the remarkable group of people (within and beyond the membership of the IATDC) who have joined in conversation about the 'nature and maintenance of communion' during the course of our study, and pay particular tribute to Bishop Stephen Pickard who took the chair at the final meeting in Malaysia, and Dr Philip Thomas who co-ordinated the study process and drafted texts for our consideration throughout the period of the Commission's remit.

**Bishop Stephen Sykes**  
Chair of IATDC, 2001-07

## PREFACE: Born in Turmoil

1. On the day before the third Anglican Communion doctrine commission was to hold its initial meeting the World Trade Centre in New York was destroyed and the Pentagon attacked. International borders were closed. Members of the Commission already on their way to the meeting found themselves 'holed up' in airports and hotels around the world. Those who were able to make their way to England held a hastily improvised meeting in Wimbledon, and began a process of conversation which could include those who were stranded. That conversation began in an atmosphere clouded by dust, death and destruction and has been carried forward - on and off - over the succeeding six years in a world overshadowed by images of fragmentation, isolation and violence. In such a world, the Gospel's invitation to *koinonia* - fellowship, communion, a common participation in the purposes of God - became overwhelmingly relevant. '9/11' gave point and power to the brief given to the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), to study the meaning of communion and how it can be nurtured within the church.
2. This brief has been held during a period when questions about unity and diversity, local and global identity, universal and particular values, have come to the forefront of public consciousness. The issues confronting the churches, and particularly the Anglican churches, have paralleled if not actually mirrored the societal and communal clashes which now dominate international news media. The question arises, does the church have any better, any different ways of confronting difference and diversity than those displayed, often so destructively, in 'the world'? This Commission, appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion after Communion-wide consultation, wants to answer that question in the affirmative. The churches' vocation towards unity really does offer a token of hope for the unity of all humankind!
3. The possibility of a disruption to the Anglican status quo was, however, always in mind. The contentious discussion of human sexuality at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 seemingly pointed towards a breaking point, even after two decades of debate about what it was that held Anglicans together. *The Virginia Report*, presented by the previous IATDC to the 1998 Conference, had outlined the grounding of the church's *koinonia* in the life of God in Trinity. The current Commission wanted to explore to what extent this model needed to be complemented

with understandings which were more historical, pneumatological and eschatological. When in 2003 questions about the possibility of lesbian, gay or trans-gendered persons exercising priestly or episcopal ministries within the church, and the legitimacy of the church offering God's blessing to same-sex partnerships came to a head, then the question of the future of Anglicanism became the current test case for the adequacy of any theology of communion.

4. This Commission was not mandated to address the presenting issue of human sexuality in its studies. Rather it was asked to explore whether the nature of the communion that Anglicans share is sufficient to hold them together in a common calling during a time when conflicts over this issue were widespread, intense, and in the opinion of some, communion-breaking. The hopeful note sounded in this report is based on the conviction that when the church faces new challenges, it also discovers new possibilities for the Gospel to disclose fresh aspects of its meaning. The Commission believes that the unity Christ wills for the church, the *koinonia* into which he calls it, involves much more than simply an alliance of like-minded believers.
5. In the modern world there are differences which reach across cultural groups. Even though they are often expressed in theological formulations they go beyond this. They express differences of disposition and ethos. The contemporary situation is often caricatured as a conflict between liberals who do not believe enough to be thought Christian and fundamentalists who adopt notions of authority which contradict a belief in the love of God. Neither picture is thought fair by those portrayed. These differences are thought by some to express different reactions to modernity. However it is explained, the emergence of such clear differences in disposition and ethos is a distinctive feature of contemporary life in the global community. Such a characterisation of our situation does not take us far enough and tends to close down possibilities for renewal.
6. 'Communion' transcends and can therefore transform differences: networks of conviction tend merely to reinforce them. Living in a Communion which justly embraces and celebrates people of differing cultures and world-views makes a fresh apprehension of Christian truth possible.
7. An explication of this principle may be inferred from the turning point of the narrative in the first three gospels, the moment when Jesus' followers recognise God at work in new ways, beyond the boundaries of

their own experience and expectations. The encounter with a Canaanite woman and the feeding of a mixed-multitude on the hillside decisively prepare the way for Peter's great confession of faith (e.g. Matthew 16.13ff). The ensuing discourse about losing life in order to gain it appears to prepare the way for the disciples to see their Lord, quite literally, in a different light (Matthew 17.1-8). They 'discover' the Gospel as they realise how different things are when seen from the perspective of Jesus. It may not be far-fetched to interpret the vision of Moses and Elijah in conversation with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration as prefiguring a transforming moment in the life of the early church. It marked a dawning perception that accepted traditions can be re-conceived, to give a new understanding of the point and purpose of the Law and Prophets. Added gravity is given to the moment by the way it involves a return to the authorised centre of that tradition - "he must go to Jerusalem" (16.21) - where the full significance of Jesus' words about losing and gaining life receive their literal realisation. If such a reading of familiar New Testament texts is at all plausible, then it has particular point for Anglicans at this time.

8. Well-publicised controversies within the churches and the Communion present the opportunity to look afresh at foundational traditions, and what it is now that holds them together. Some theologians go so far as to speak of the 'invention' and 'reinvention' of Anglicanism. Such a notion suggests that while Anglicanism has never been defined by a fixed doctrinal formula against which new situations and challenges must be tested, it is comprised of a living, dynamic tradition which is capable of rediscovering its calling through the way it responds to the message of Christ in changing situations. The future of Anglicanism will depend on how boldly it will draw on that tradition in the face of current challenges.
9. In our own meetings and from the method of study we have adopted (described further in Part III), the Commission has sought to experience and reflect on the actual diversity of the Anglican Communion, and we have found that it can bear the weight of our differences. From that first fragmented gathering in Wimbledon, two further meetings in America and another in Africa (the seeming loci of the disputes which threaten Anglican coherence), and a final gathering in Malaysia, where Christians live in a context of historic Muslim influence, we have met face to face and learned in a real measure to deepen our communion through 'facing' our differences together. Taking this communion-building process further, we intentionally adopted a method of

consultation which invited the Communion to join in conversation with us. We invited Provinces, dioceses, Anglican theological institutions and the general public to explore threats to *koinonia* by way of *Four Key Questions* (2001). Discussion of the underlying issues that the answers revealed was then promoted by seeking responses to *Six Propositions* (2002). The unfolding character of these discussions was registered through a succession of summary documents which were widely distributed throughout the Communion. When the Commission reconvened in 2006, it was further informed by replies to *Four Further Questions for Clarification* (2006) which sought to clarify the argument. An indication of the trajectory of that whole conversation is indicated in Part III.

10. Our hopes for the future of the communion of the church are grounded in the conviction that God's people are a family bound together by common faith and sacramental ties. In some parts of the world, the term 'family relationship' has come to refer to loose associations. We prefer to think of those extended families that embrace a number of generations and are united by strong and enduring ties as a model for the church. The families we have in mind cannot easily be broken by circumstances. They nurture their members through trials and difficulties and are a source of inspiration and love. The church as the family of God comprises those open to testing through times of crisis and willing always to engage in a prior call to pursue goodness and kindness, justice and truth. For Anglicans today, grace-filled renewal and witness may be found on a pathway which leads more fully into our sharing the delights and sufferings of all in the family. The future of the Anglican Communion, as with all Christian institutions, in the end rests solely on the security of God's promise to his people (Genesis 12.1-2; Matthew 16.18). Striving in the Spirit, we appropriate that future by responding anew to the call of the Gospel, by living as Christians together, risking the possibilities of disputes and failure, while seeking to resolve them in hope and love. The Collect for our final day as a Commission captures this well:

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit  
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:  
grant that your people may be fervent  
in the communion of the gospel  
that, always abiding in you,  
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Collect for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost from the Prayer  
Book of South East Asia, adapted*



## PART I

### THE WAY OF COMMUNION: A Continuing Conversation

11. We have included within this report a narrative of our process, as we believe that embedded within the narrative itself are helpful insights into the way we have learned new things about the practice of Communion. The Commission has not been conducting an opinion poll or presenting a questionnaire, but engaging in a serious theological conversation. We have been seeking to register the concrete experience of communion among Anglican churches around the world, and to begin a process of reflection on its meaning, especially in times of change and disruption. And in offering, in this report, the story and fruits of this consultative method, we are hoping to provide a model of how ‘communion in action’ may be achieved. It is our conviction that the life of this Commission and its method of working provides not only an important indication of our understanding of the nature of *koinonia*, but also a contribution to *koinonia* within the Communion’s own life.

#### *Communion in a Time of Transition*

12. The final version of this report was put together during our meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a country where Anglican Christians are a small minority of the population. What does ‘communion’ mean practically and theologically in such a context? Why is it important for Anglicans, both the local Anglican community, and those of us who are visiting the region? We directly experienced ‘communion’ ourselves in a number of ways, not least the welcoming care and gracious efficiency with which we were received by the people of the Diocese of West Malaysia in the Province of South East Asia. As with our earlier hosts in London, the USA and Kenya, we quite literally became their ‘companions’ (*cum* = with, *panis* = bread) in communion as we shared spiritual and physical food with them. Our gathering also reminded us that the need for engagement with Muslims is a major contextual reality for current Anglican Christian self-understanding. Additionally, it reinforced our awareness of the rapidly growing influence of Chinese churches in the development of world Christianity. It was realised that many Chinese churches define themselves as ‘post-denominational’, and by doing so they consciously challenge bodies like the Anglican Communion to ask new questions of themselves and to explain why ‘communion’ is important for Anglicans. As the comments in the Preface make clear, such a sense of engagement with the political,

religious and ecclesial realities of our current world has been a mark of this Commission since its inception, and has gradually become written into the method we have employed to facilitate our work.

13. At the same time these realities also offer us particular challenges, as members of a Communion which is called to privilege and stand alongside those 'on the edge', since, according to the gospel witness, that is where God himself chooses to be situated. Edges are important, reminding us that local situations have much to teach any apparent centre. The wind of the Spirit is blowing in new directions in our world, and it is our task to follow - striving to keep up with this fresh breeze, so that we can truly live together in the communion into which we are being drawn by the Spirit. At such a time of change and disruption new understandings of what gives coherence to the Christian community, and the place of the Anglican Communion within it, are necessary - and that is precisely what the 'Communion Study' has been exploring.

### ***Communion as Communication***

14. This has also been the period in which the internet first became a widely available tool for world-wide communication. During that first disrupted meeting in September 2001 (see Preface), the Internet and emails became a vital tool allowing those who could not be physically present to offer their contribution to the remnant who had managed to gather in Wimbledon. This experience inspired the decision to continue that sort of conversation throughout the Anglican Communion. Although there are still problems about 'information rich/poor' use of IT, over the five years of our working life the great majority of Primates, dioceses and theological institutions with whom we have sought to communicate have shown themselves willing to receive material by email. Of course ready access to email has other implications, allowing, and sometimes demanding, instantaneous reactions to unfolding events. Like all international bodies, in recent years the Anglican Communion has on occasion been affected both positively and negatively by the ease with which people can use this tool.<sup>1</sup>
15. For our own work electronic communications have provided the opportunity for conversation. It is easy to invite comments in the name of consultation, but our method has in fact offered not just consultation but actual participation in a common task. IATDC's aim has been to identify and explore issues which underlie failure of communion. The documents we have offered for study, each building upon responses previously received - the *Four Key Questions* leading to *Six*

*Propositions* and then *Four Further Questions for Clarification* (see Appendix One, and discussion in Paragraphs 55-59) - have fed into this Communion Study which attempted to gather together the perspectives and the experience of the whole Communion.<sup>2</sup> We have tried to acknowledge comments received, engage in some debate in a number of instances, and all contributions have been taken seriously and fed into our ongoing work. Regular reports on, and documentation linked to our work, have appeared on the Anglican Communion website ([www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org)), which we want to commend as an invaluable tool of communication for the Communion. Such a method has demonstrated the importance of *communication* as a key element among the different elements of communion. Through communication the various aspects of communion - practical, missional, canonical, and theological - can be brought into relationship with each other, and their distinctive voices ‘tuned’ to harmonise. It is significant that the two words ‘communion’ and ‘communication’ both relate to a common Latin root, from which the word *munus*, which appropriately and tellingly includes the notion of both ‘gift’ and ‘duty’, also derives.

### ***Communion in Process***

16. This report on the Communion Study attempts to capture important threads of that conversation, synthesise them with its own reflections (see Part III), and develop an argument which is based upon them (see ‘Testing Communion’, Part II paras 23-52). This is not a ‘Wikipedia-theology’ in which any opinion can be offered - or contradicted. IATDC, as an authorised body for theological study within the Communion during the period of its remit, has sought to give shape and substance to the whole process. Commission members have written papers relevant to the theme of our work and consulted with other leading theological voices in the Anglican Communion. At each stage of the process it has given indications of its progress to the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates’ Meeting and the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as parallel bodies such as the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations and the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism. It has taken seriously the need for a body which is reflecting upon the importance of communion to express this in a way which is properly accountable to the wider church.
17. Our working pattern of consultative engagement has been founded upon the model of *dispersed authority*. The term - and its exposition in documents emerging from the 1948 Lambeth Conference - has

sometimes been misunderstood as negating clear decision-making among Anglicans by warning against “the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power”.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the documentation from 1948 makes it clear that authority “is single in that it is derived from a single Divine source”, although mediated or distributed through God’s loving provision in several modes in order that it might be gathered together in “the *consensus fidelium*, which is the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit through his faithful people in the Church”.<sup>4</sup> That document goes on to suggest that the historical experience of Anglicans over the centuries and in different parts of the world is best understood by reference to an authority “moral and spiritual, resting on the truth of the Gospel and on a charity which is patient and willing to defer to the common mind”.<sup>5</sup> A fresh understanding of such authority is plainly crucial to any resolution of Anglicanism’s present difficulties. Dispersed authority implies mutual accountability and this Commission tried to model this in its relations with both the formal and informal structures of our Communion.

18. Certainly the theological method adopted by IATDC has been of a dispersed rather than a centralised character. This is the core of our argument, namely that it is the shared historic, theological and missional experiences of the Gospel which hold Anglicans together. It is this also that needs to undergird our structures and polity. Dispersed authority seems highly appropriate for a Communion which seeks to honour the ‘edges’. If the outcome of the Windsor process should result in some definitive centralisation of the Communion then one function of this report may be to constitute an appraisal of that development. As the 1948 document put it: “It may be said that authority of this [dispersed] kind is much harder to understand and obey than authority of a more imperious character. This is true and we glory in the appeal which it makes to faith”.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is not that dispersed authority in the present circumstances has been tried and found to fail: it is that it has been found to be too hard - and so not tried for long enough!
19. Anglicanism has always been willing, when necessary, to face new situations, and develop new warrants for doing so. Historically, it showed that it could offer a third way between extreme catholicism and radical puritanism. It has discovered, gradually, that it is possible to be a church without recourse to state patronage and be Anglican without being English. It is acknowledging that ministry is not determined by gender - and also recognising that different parts of the Communion make such an acknowledgement in different ways and at different times.

20. The contemporary world situation means that new understandings of what it means to be part of one, holy, catholic and apostolic church are necessary. The participative and communal way of studying the meaning and sustaining of communion that IATDC has been developing has the potential to disclose some of the ecclesiological 'black swans' - understandings of the church and the world which (like black swans which were unknown until discovered in Australasia) could not be imagined from the perspective of European history alone! Not all of God's future can be extrapolated from a study of the past.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Communion and the Future***

21. The future of the Anglican Communion will in part be dependent on the way and the extent to which the 'instruments of communion' (the Lambeth Conference; the Anglican Consultative Council; the Primates' Meeting) are enabled to communicate with each other and with member churches of the Communion in mutual respect and attentiveness. That is essential if they are to retain trust and affection in a period of rapid historical change. Such communication arising out of the roots of our faith must go beyond simply utilitarian concerns, and will indeed lead towards the deepening of 'communion' with each other, an intensity of communion in which we may 'discern the body' of Christ (I Corinthians 11.29). Throughout our work we have held to the vision of the church as a learning community which is being led by the Spirit on a pilgrimage into truth, which will honour yet also transfigure our shared history. The collegial method we have adopted throughout our work and in the production of this report, an approach which requires detailed listening to and engagement with a wide range of voices throughout the Communion, is an example of communion in action. It is an important model we commend to those who come after us in their work with and for the church.
22. In the following section (Part II) we offer a theological account of the theme of communion. In Part III we detail the results of the consultative process and in so doing identify key issues that remain on the agenda for the Anglican Communion.



## PART II

### TESTING COMMUNION: Conflict and Hope in the Spirit

#### *Introduction*

23. It will be clear from the previous section (Part I) that the Commission has worked at consulting widely within the Communion in pursuit of a particular way of doing conciliar theology. The Commission has also engaged with the nature of communion in the church and the issues now facing the Anglican Communion. In this we have listened to the different perspectives within our own membership. In the light of that listening we have formulated a theological argument which we believe speaks to the underlying issues facing the present and future life of the Anglican Communion. This process has confronted us with the challenges of ecclesial life presented in the New Testament and in our own Anglican tradition. We have struggled to understand how each in their own location is to be faithful to Christ and how that inculturating aspect of faithfulness may create subsequent differences in the wider church. Throughout our work we have been confronted with the presence of the crucified Christ and the transforming power of the Spirit. We have been left with a sharpened sense of the failures and fallibility we find in ourselves and the life of the church and the unremitting power of the hope in Christ to which we are called. Our theological argument is presented in this section.
24. In Matthew 12 Jesus prepares his disciples for their vocation. He warns them that he has come to bring fire on the earth (Matthew 12.49). Jesus challenged the very categories of understanding of his hearers. The peace which he brought was the peace which came through crucifixion and resurrection (Colossians 1.19-20; Isaiah 53.5). The peace which passes all understanding (Philippians 4.4-7) is also the paradoxical peace which comes to those who have entered the kingdom of God (Matthew 10.34-39). That is the peace to which the community of God's people has always been called (Ezekiel 37.26). From the very first Jesus' words and actions proved hard to understand. Even amongst the close-knit group of the first disciples there were misunderstandings, mistakes, conflicts and disputes. That did not mean that there were not clear indications about the basis upon which Christians should live. On the contrary the broad outlines were very clear indeed. As the Christians grew in number the particular issues became more complex and the formation of institutions added to this complexity. Church history is the

story of these difficulties and also of the persistent vocation to live out the gospel virtues to which this manifestly fallible community was committed.

***“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”***

25. The New Testament documents record with abundant candour the failures, conflicts and mistakes of the disciples and leaders of the early church communities. In the gospels we are told on a number of occasions that the disciples did not always understand Jesus’ parables (Matthew 15.5ff; Mark 10.41-13, 4.35, 7.17ff; cf. Isaiah 6.8-10), the significance of his miracles (e.g. Mark 8.14-21) or key elements of his teaching (Mark 8.31-33). At one level who could blame them? It was not that Jesus’ teaching was complex or set out in a highly abstract or obscure way. On the contrary it was expressed in the simplest of images and words. What made it difficult was that it challenged the cultural and mental assumptions which the disciples brought to their encounter with Jesus. That challenge has continued to the present day wherever Christians move from one culture to another.
26. In other parts of the New Testament such problems are also reported. There is disorder and immorality amongst the Corinthian Christians (I Corinthians 5.1-5, 6.1ff, 11.17-22; II Corinthians 2.5-11); social conflicts are referred to in Romans 15; Peter and Paul have an open breach over Jewish and Gentile fellowship (Galatians 2.11-14); and there is recurrent trouble between Paul and some in Corinth (II Corinthians 11.12-15). There are relationship problems in Philippi (Philippians 4.2); Paul and Barnabas split over their evangelistic work because of a difference of opinion about the reliability of a colleague, John Mark (Acts 15.36-41). More appalling is the dispute amongst the disciples as to who should be the greatest among them, reported just after Jesus’ announcement of his impending crucifixion (Mark 10.33-45), and also at the Last Supper before his crucifixion (Luke 22.24-27). The Jerusalem church tried a form of community life which included shared property and welfare support for members (Acts 4.32-5.11) which, it would appear from the New Testament, was subsequently abandoned.
27. In the midst of all this the flame of the Gospel flickered yet burnt on with persistence. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit brought a miraculous demonstration of how the message of the mighty deeds of God was to be transformed into the language and meaning of many

cultures (Acts 2.1-15; Joel 2.28-32). But inculturation did not divide the believers. Despite the different languages spoken, all of those present at Pentecost heard the same Gospel proclaimed. That process of crossing linguistic and cultural borders continued with the spread of the Gospel. The enormously significant issue of the place in the Christian church of the Mosaic law, given by God for the people of Israel, arose very early. How far was the form of God's word in the law to be embraced by gentile Christians who were outside the law? The story of the meeting in Jerusalem of representatives from Antioch where the trouble first emerged is telling in a number of respects (Acts 15.1-35). Representatives from Antioch met with the Jerusalem apostles and elders to confront the issues. An agreement was reached as general advice for places beyond Antioch where gentiles converted as a result of the mission of Paul and Barnabas. It was an agreement for the time. Clearly it did not last and how far it was extended at the time is uncertain. Yet nonetheless those involved believed that in confronting the issue together they attended not just to each other and the rest of their communities, but to the voice of God. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"(v28, cf. v22) sums up a vital element in the communication of the Gospel and the establishment of new churches.

### ***The Holy Spirit and Fallibility in the Church***

28. The presence of God among the first disciples was manifest in their experience of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised another counsellor after his departure, the Holy Spirit. Both the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of the New Testament speak much of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and in the personal lives of Christians. It is by the Spirit that people confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. It is by the Spirit that they grow in Christian virtue and it is by the Spirit that they look beyond their immediate circumstances to the Kingdom of God (Luke 4.18-19; Isaiah 61.1-2) .
29. Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come and lead them into all truth and would testify to them of him (John 15.26ff, 16.12-15). The Spirit would inspire them to lead a Christ-like life. This work of the Spirit is clearly to be seen in the Jerusalem council. The conclusion is specific to the issue before them. They listened to each other and to the testimony about what God had been doing through their lives relative to the question under discussion. The conclusion is thus particular and limited in scope of time and place and also at the same time testifies to the presence of the Spirit in leading the church:

“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”. Divine immanence is evident in contingent circumstances such as these.

30. Paul responded to the divisions at Corinth with the same bold theological understanding. There were in Corinth “spiritual people” with a concern for “spiritual things” (I Corinthians 12; cf 2.14-16). Paul asserts that the Spirit produces the confession that Jesus is Lord and thus this confession becomes the test of any spiritual claims (12.3). He then speaks of the Corinthians’ contributions in the congregation as gifts from God. The problem is in the way they are exercised. He suggests that the gifts could be thought of in terms of the different parts of the human body which nonetheless work in harmony, an image used at the time for political order. But the real and better argument arises out of the very nature of the Gospel itself. The “more excellent way” (I Corinthians 12.31) is that such gifts should be exercised according the gospel virtue of love. Faith and hope speak to the eschatological character of the Christian vocation; love speaks to the substantive nature of the Gospel in living form. Love gains particular expression in other contexts in different ways. In Paul’s letters it is held within the framework of dying and rising with Christ. Thus Christ becomes the touchstone for the moral understanding of the Christian and of the Christian community. The relationship with Christ which shapes the moral life of the Christians and the church community originates in their “dying and rising with Christ” in order to live to God (Romans 6). The community is thus called to live in a Christ-like way.

### *Difficulties of Growth*

31. The multiplication of Christian churches and the explosion in the number of Christians in the second and third centuries led to many more complications and demands for arrangements to deal with these new challenges. Conflicts and disputes were a significant part of this experience. Institutions were tried and developed. Some endured, others did not. An ordered ministry of bishops priests and deacons, regular patterns of sacramental life and a canon of scripture did endure. Gnostic gospels and Montanist oracles did not. Patterns of baptism and catechesis emerged in various forms and endured for a long time, but not all survived into the modern period.
32. Just as in the communities of the New Testament, conflict arose as to the nature and operation of the faith and the meaning of the Gospel in changing circumstances. Some disputes such as the conflict over the

teachings of Arius lasted a very long time, others were more quickly resolved. Disputes were complicated by differences of language such as those between Greek, Latin and Syriac, or between different usages and patterns of piety. These conflicts were often complex in origin and difficult to resolve. The great ecumenical councils of the early church struggled with such questions in order to maintain apostolic faithfulness together with a true catholicity. These struggles were often overlaid with the all too human elements of power and prestige, ambition and pride. At a time of rapid growth in the church, the life of the community had the usual elements of moral failure, conflict, mistaken paths, as well as the resilient impulse to be faithful to Christ, to be led by the Spirit.

33. These issues can be found in all periods of history because they are part and parcel of the experience of the church as a fragile and fallible community (I Corinthians 4.7ff, 5.1-5; cf. Jeremiah 8.4-11; Hosea 6.4) seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit in its worship and life. This is no less true in the specifically Anglican tradition; indeed the long running period of identification with the political powers of the nation created its own very particular form of problems. Such problems still echo in the life of Anglican churches around the world and we can expect they will arise in new churches wherever they develop. Any account of communion and any Anglican ecclesiology for today has to deal with these dynamics in ecclesial life.

### ***Ambivalence in Anglican Ecclesiology***

34. The experience of the church has resulted in a certain ambivalence woven into the fabric of Anglican ecclesiology. There is a concern to deal faithfully with both the divine character of the church as a community of people called by God (I Peter 2.9; Exodus 6.6-7, 19.5-6) and led by the Holy Spirit to live in hope of the resurrection, and also to recognise the much more messy empirical reality of the actual church community. The characteristic Anglican disposition to deal seriously with this polarity has meant that the relation between the two can be neither straightforward nor simple. One classic discussion of this issue comes in Michael Ramsey's 1936 book *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*.<sup>8</sup> Ramsey draws attention to the dynamic of this interaction between the Gospel and empirical church life. It is something like the polarity between ideal and actual. The ambivalence here highlights the pilgrim character of the life of the church and the necessity for an open textured and dynamic ecclesiology (Hebrews 11.8; Genesis 12.1-3).

35. Indeed, there are a number of polarities in such an Anglican ecclesiology. First, that between vocation and performance which points to the fallibility of the church and the central role of repentance and forgiveness in its life. Second, that tension between present action and resurrection hope which points to the contingency of our circumstances and our resolutions. Third, that between local and universal manifestations of the church which points to difference and interdependence, key elements of catholicity.

### *Change and Difference*

36. Certain cultural realities in the Anglican Communion contribute to the severity of the current dispute. The Commission recognises the complexity and ambiguity arising from any uncritical use of the word 'culture' and various meanings attached to the concept. From the beginning, the church has contained people of various ethnic, social and religious origins. All of these factors help give rise to different forms of life, commonly described as culture. As a result of the interplay between human groupings differences in culture come to be perceived and expressed. In this situation, cross-cultural and intra-cultural dialogue and interaction become a necessary expression of faithfulness to the Gospel. Any misuse of economic or political power, including culturally-based claims to inhibit, corrupt or destroy this interaction must be firmly rejected. We do not underestimate the difficulty in pursuing dialogue but despite the fact that cultural differences can sow conflict and division, they can also generate fresh insight into the meaning of our faith. Our lives as faithful people are given meaning as we first internalise and then live out cultural values and the teaching of the Gospel (Matthew 5.1-13; Micah 6.6-8).
37. Since there is always a uniqueness about our circumstances in history our understanding of material from previous ages is always to some extent inadequate. The differences between cultures create a similar challenge. If we are called to be faithful in our own particular situation then our way of being faithful may well be markedly different from the way in which Anglicans in another culture experience their vocation to faithfulness. This has been a perennial challenge for God's people: Joseph in Egypt, Daniel and the exiles in Babylon, Esther in Persia (see especially Jeremiah 29.4-7; Daniel 1) Our lives are to some extent given meaning by the degree to which we internalise the values and meanings of the institutions which we inhabit. For example, the move to synodical government in Anglican churches around the world has influenced the

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way in which authority in the church is understood and how episcopacy functions. This means that the dramatic institutional changes in Anglicanism in the nineteenth and twentieth century have affected Anglicans in different ways according to their locality.

38. The current crisis in understanding the place of people who are in committed same sex relationships in the public life of the church arises as a result of the shift in the balance of continuity and change. Change and development have always been present in the Christian church. The balance has been different at different times. The novelty lies in the extent to which the balance has shifted towards change, initially in western culture and in the churches shaped by that culture.
39. A strong emphasis on the local is characteristic of the Anglican tradition of Christian faith. Each in their own location is called by the Gospel to be faithful to Christ in the terms of that local situation. As a result of the work done at a consultation of the Anglican Mission Agencies Network, held in 1986 in Brisbane, the South to South consultations were initiated precisely to encourage that sort of local witness. However this emphasis on being faithful in terms of the local situation can easily lead to an uncritical conformity of church life to its local context. To the extent that this is the case, such conformity displaces the church's vocation to catholicity. This situation has, in Anglican experience, been complicated by the history of missionary agencies with different ecclesial styles and dispositions working in particular locations and thus producing another kind of Anglican difference.
40. Early in its life the Anglican Consultative Council engaged with the vital issue of inculturation and proposed the first IATDC. That Commission's report was published in 1986 under the title *For the Sake of the Kingdom*.<sup>9</sup> The Commission was given the task by the Anglican Consultative Council of preparing "a study of the relationship between the Church of God as experienced and the Kingdom of God as anticipated, with special reference to the diverse and changing cultural contexts in which the Gospel is proclaimed, received, and lived".<sup>10</sup> This is precisely the question that is at the root of the present events in the Anglican Communion. The report formed the basis of the first part of the Section report on Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns at the 1988 Lambeth Conference. That section also had before it a draft paper on what was at that time the vexed issue of the ordination of women and these concerns dominated the resolutions of the Conference from this section and set the terms of the work of the second IATDC and the Eames Commission.

41. The argument of *For the Sake of the Kingdom* has not been as widely known as subsequent reports, in part because of the public and controversial nature of the questions these later reports addressed. But the underlying issues of theology were clearly addressed in *For the Sake of the Kingdom*. The report addressed the issue of pluralism and the norms of Christian judgement. It suggested that three elements interact in the formation of judgements about the meaning of the Gospel in a plural environment. “Proximately, therefore, and in practice, the basis on which the church speaks of Christ and makes its judgements is the set of institutions which mediate its relation to Christ: the Scriptures, the creeds, and - though in a different and complementary way - the sacramental life.”<sup>11</sup>
42. These elements will not necessarily produce uniformity. On the contrary, there is a long history in Anglicanism of pluriformity because “Christians in a given place and time both will and must share the cultural idiom of their geographical and social locale.”<sup>12</sup> Hence the Anglican Communion “should take the form of a fellowship that encourages local and regional initiative and nourishes styles of church life which fit - and address - particular societies and cultures.”<sup>13</sup> Where there is a lack of critical distance from the ambient culture, the report speaks of the need for repentance. In so doing it testifies to the transcendence of the kingdom of God.
43. The second IATDC arose from the 1988 Lambeth Conference which was faced with the proposal by the Episcopal Church of the United States of America to ordain women to the episcopate. The Conference recognised that there was a need for an examination of the relationships between the Provinces of the Anglican Communion and for continuing consultation in the process of reception (for which see the Eames Commission Report<sup>14</sup>). There was also a need “to describe how the Anglican Communion makes authoritative decisions while maintaining unity and interdependence in the light of the many theological issues that arise from its diversity”.<sup>15</sup> The Conference asked for “further exploration of the meaning and nature of communion; with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church, and the unity and community of humanity”.<sup>16</sup> In response, the second IATDC produced *The Virginia Report* which explored the church’s mission and identity as communion: “The mission of the Church is to be the icon of God’s life. By prayer and praise, mercy and peace, justice and love, constantly welcoming the sinner, the outcast, the marginalised into her sanctuary, the Church is revealed as communion

and is faithful to its mission".<sup>17</sup> The Report discussed how the church is structured and how the particular structures of the Anglican Communion enable it to reach the authoritative decisions that from time to time are needed to maintain unity.

44. The challenge of pluralism within the Anglican Communion in *For the Sake of the Kingdom* and the issues of division and *koinonia* as presented in *The Virginia Report* raise crucial questions about the nature of the church. The creed identifies the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Each generation struggles to give expression to all these marks of the church. The simultaneous need for faithfulness to the teaching of the Scriptures and commitment to the unity of the church can helpfully be discussed by reflecting on the meaning of catholicity and the way in which the principle of catholicity embraces the inevitable tensions between the local and the universal in ecclesial life.

### ***Dynamic Catholicity***

45. From the first, the local church has had a catholic dimension; it relates to the wider body of churches in space and time. Without such relationship it cannot function healthily as a local church. The communication of the Gospel is the sharing of a life, the life of the community. That life of a local community is not sufficient to itself. In the dynamic process of preaching and reception of the Gospel the communities belong to each other.
46. Within the local church there is a variety of gifts that enable the body to function freely but beyond the local church there are gifts that the local church may need to grow more fully in Christ. The experience of catholicity is an experience of delight in the gift of the other both within the local church and beyond it. The life of the wider church may be seen in terms of exchange of gifts for the building up of the whole body (I Corinthians 12; cf. Exodus 31.1-11). The enormous diversity in local expression of the faith as churches seek faithfully to live out their Christian vocation in their own circumstances provides the rich soil for the gifts which God gives to his people each day.
47. God's people have a long history of receiving the gift of the 'outsider': Hagar (Genesis 16.13), Tamar (Genesis 38, Matthew 1.3), Rahab (Joshua 6, Matthew 1.5, Hebrews 11.31), Ruth (Matthew 1.5), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). In churches at every level there are minorities whose gifts and experience may all too easily be overlooked by the majority. There are also churches whose members represent a

minority in the wider society. This is true in societies where other religions or other Christian traditions predominate and where atheistic materialism is dominant. Within the life of the church at every level, global, provincial, diocesan or parish, where the insights and gifts of minorities are overlooked conflict may be difficult to resolve and communion impaired. A lively sense of catholic mutual interdependence is a source of strength, encouragement and stability at every level.

48. For Anglicans the experience of catholicity has, however, been an experience of incompleteness. Anglicanism has never sought to be a world-wide church sufficient in itself. It has sought from the first to find its place in the life of the universal church, from its beginning to its eschatological consummation. "For while the Anglican church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to gospel and church and sound learning, its greater vindication lies in its pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment. Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and the travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as 'the best type of Christianity', but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died."<sup>18</sup>
49. Traditional Anglican structures have developed little beyond provincial level. That has reflected an underlying provincial ecclesiology of disciplined order sufficient to provide a ministry of word and sacraments that is both catholic and apostolic. It also embodied a practical recognition of the limits of workable connection. This is reflected in the persistent refusal of successive Lambeth Conferences to see themselves as a disciplinary body and their affirmations of provincial autonomy. As a consequence when we have had to deal with global Communion issues of order we have not had extensive ecclesiological precedent. Our history has not prepared us to handle such conflicts with confidence.

### ***Resolving Conflict in Hope***

50. Conflict arises because of real differences about our faithfulness to our Christian vocation. Conflict always involves suffering, puzzlement and distress. When harnessed creatively, it can however be a gift from God (e.g. Philippians 3.7-11, 4.11-13; cf. Genesis 33.10; Isaiah 58.4-11). The path towards resolving such conflict will involve following in the steps of the crucified Christ and allowing the presence of the Spirit to bring the conflicted parties to a place of new life. Situations of conflict can, through the power of the Spirit, become opportunities to enhance our

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mutual understanding and to grow in the faith. The experience of conflict can offer an opportunity for Christians in the midst of their disagreement to discover the love for the other that is at the heart of Christ's sacrifice and which characterises our vocation in Christ. Our constant temptation is to grasp at the resolution of conflict by deployment of power and by manipulation. This is not the way of Christ. There is always need for a ministry of reconciliation to guide Christians in the way of Christ and to build up the Body of Christ. Sometimes we hear of Communion being broken, and often this language is used in rhetorical exchanges about particular issues in dispute. The greater reality, however, is the brokenness of the church within which communion can and does flourish. Communion flourishes when we accept that discipleship in the church is a call to the way of the cross in the brokenness of the church to which we all contribute.

51. Such costly participation in the crucifixion and resurrection sharpens our sense of the hope we have in Christ. This hope will not permit the fallibility which we bring to handling our conflicts to be the last word. Within the day-to-day process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding we grow up into that unity in Christ which characterises the catholicity of the church in all its fullness.

### *Virtues for Ecclesial Life*

52. There is another side to this Anglican approach to ecclesiology. It focuses on the centrality of worship and the life of a Christian community that it might be brought to "that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness of and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life".<sup>19</sup> The church in pilgrimage is not simply a rescue home for sinners, though it is that. It is also a school for Christian virtues. The Collect for the Sunday before Lent in the 1662 BCP expresses this point very directly, "Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee". Each generation and each local church is called to manifest Christ-likeness of life in the church. Forgiving is both a gift and a habit of life learned in the community of the faithful. So also are patience, humility, trust and hope, even though the form of these virtues may in their particular expression vary from time to time and from place to place (cf. James 3.13-18; Proverbs 8). It is these Christian virtues which

will be both tested and nurtured in the differences and conflicts within the church.

## PART III

### SUSTAINING COMMUNION: The Process of Consultative Theology

53. In Part II we have offered a theological reflection on the nature of communion in the context of conflict and trustful hope in Christ. This reflection is the fruit of our earlier consultative work. In this section (Part III) we detail the process of consultative theology which has informed our argument in Part II. Among many other things we hope that this section (and the accompanying Appendix One) will prove a useful educational tool for further reflection on the way of communion in Christ.
54. In a rapidly fragmenting world, Christians need to think about what it is that binds them together. Can the Gospel offer hope to a threatened world order? Can it provide an example of the way that some things can be shared even when the movement of history seems at present to be pulling communities and cultures apart?
55. The dramatic background to our first meeting and the experience of solidarity which it gave to people who in many cases had not even met, suggested that a study of communion had much to learn from people whose everyday experience of the Gospel was repeatedly worked out in situations of crisis and change. As indicated earlier, the study proceeded with an invitation to the Communion as a whole, through correspondence with its Provinces, dioceses and theological institutions, to share understandings of the nature and importance of 'communion' and to identify things, both local and in a wider framework, which threatened its existence.

#### *The Experience of Communion*

56. Four Key Questions were circulated to gauge the way in which the reality of communion was experienced by Anglicans around the world. Those questions concerned the meaning given to the word 'communion' by Anglicans; the nature of disputes which threatened to break communion; and the ways in which Christian teachings about moral behaviour were related to the maintenance of communion. The full text of these questions appears in Appendix One of this present report and the summary of responses received from around the Communion were gathered together in a document entitled *The Communion Study, 2002*.

It can be found in the IATDC section of the Anglican Communion website [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org).

57. Those responses revealed the diversity and richness of Anglican self-understanding as well as deep divisions in approaches to many of the features which have traditionally held Anglicans together. But they also enabled understanding of the importance of questions about the future of Anglicanism for many Christians. These Christians are concerned about the issues that divide them, but desperately want to hold on to a living connection with the world-wide church without which their sense of isolation would be increased, and their ability to address their particular callings to faithfulness and mission greatly diminished.
58. Anglicans claim that their tradition seeks to embody a distinctive way through theological and social conflicts, and to encapsulate in their comprehensiveness a distinct way of maintaining unity in diversity. Sustaining communion through the conflicts and challenges of our times requires trust and commitment to an ongoing process of consultation. In this process the key elements are listening, responding and being attentive to the leading of the Spirit. This is always costly and transformative because it is the way of Jesus Christ. The process of engagement is an ongoing one and the Commission considered that a practical way forward for the church in difficult times was to keep the key proposals, reflections, responses and ongoing questions before the Communion as it discerned its future in the Gospel.

### ***Underlying Issues for Communion***

59. Six Propositions were circulated in the Communion by the Commission. These arose from the *Four Key Questions* which had enquired about the actual experiences of communion that Anglicans share. It was possible from the answers received to discern some of the underlying issues which, for some, make any idea of an Anglican Communion problematic. A second stage of the study put forward six propositions for debate. They covered the place of the Bible in the church; the relationship between doctrine and ethics; the challenge of inculturation; the problem of discernment in identifying disputes of various kinds; the relation between the member churches of the Communion in responding to disputes; and structures for conflict resolution. The full text of these propositions appears in the sections which follow and in Appendix One of this report. Each proposition was accompanied by a passage of Scripture, a reflection, and questions for discussion, and these elements

recur through this stage of the report. A summary of the contributions to this debate is given in *Proposals and Prospects: a compilation of responses to the IATDC's Six Propositions* to be found in the IATDC section of [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org), the Anglican Communion website. For clarity's sake we refer to the Propositions as 'Statements' in the rest of Part III.

60. Four Further Questions for Clarification followed. These questions were circulated in a third round of discussion. They related to the way Anglicans in different parts of the world could read the Bible together; the nature of covenant and its value for Anglicans; the possibilities for communion between the member churches in the context of current disputes; the choice of language used to speak about people with whom one disagreed. These questions can be found in the sections following and in Appendix One of this report. A summary of the answers received is provided in *Responses to the IATDC's four questions, 2006* and found in the IATDC section of the Anglican Communion website.

### ***An Educational Resource***

61. It should be stressed that the process as outlined above (paras. 56-60) was not just intended as a detached study. It was a way of inviting individuals and groups in the Communion to engage with the substantive issues of the Communion. As noted earlier the responses received by the Commission revealed the diversity and richness of Anglican self-understanding, but also deep divisions in approaches to many of the features which have traditionally held Anglicans together. Accordingly the next section of the report focuses on the issues identified as central for its life together at this point in its history. In particular it focuses on six key issues closely linked to the 'Propositions' or 'Statements' discussed in the Communion. Each includes an initial comment from the Commission and responses from the people of the church. The more discursive way in which the issues are treated in what follows echo the different voices which have been heard from the Communion and the way the Commission reflected upon them. It is hoped that this will provide a useful resource for ongoing discussion, education, and the formation of a holy people of God, as well as providing the theological foundations upon which a viable communion of Anglican churches can be maintained.

## *Consultative Communion: A Theology of Engagement*

### **62. ISSUE 1: The Gospel and Scripture: The Centrality of the Bible in the Anglican Tradition**

- **STATEMENT 1:** The *koinonia* of the Anglican Communion is both greatly enriched, and at times challenged and confused, by the variety of ways of encountering Scripture. We bring our whole lives, in our different cultural and personal contexts, to Scripture, and from those places open ourselves to ‘being read by’ Scripture.
63. The debate invited by the first of the six statements drew attention to the way in which the authority of the Bible is seen by some to be confused by varieties of interpretive methods.
64. The Commission commented while introducing that discussion: “As particular members of the Anglican Communion, we bring our contextual, cultural, and personal situations to bear upon the task of ‘reading in communion’ with others across space and time. Private reading and study of Scripture takes place, by implication, within the larger framework of the church’s praise of God and proclamation of the Word in common prayer and eucharist”.
65. “The Anglican tradition of reading the Bible carries an historic deep respect for biblical scholarship, taking seriously the integrity of the canon, historical contextuality and original languages of the Bible. ‘Historical’ studies are well complemented by ‘theological’ interpretations and ‘literary’ readings. In addition, theologians in many parts of the world have called attention to issues of power and privilege in biblical interpretation and the need for Christians to listen to one another across cultural differences and economic divisions.”
66. The Commission went on to conclude: “The rich variety of material within the canon resists all human attempts to reduce it to a flat or uniform agenda. At the same time, the biblical writings are consistent witnesses to the trustworthiness of the triune God and, for all their differences of style, content, and opinion, they are clearly part of one conversation that intends to be open to hear the Word of that one God. A Ghanaian parable of individuals and community within the family helps us here: from a distance one sees the people of the family like a forest; only in closer proximity does one see the particular features of each tree. So the art of reading and living under a Scripture which is both unified and diverse is an organic part of the vocation to live together

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within our single yet richly variegated Communion. It is within this context that our ongoing and vital debates about the ‘authority’ of Scripture must take place.”

67. The conversation which has developed around those assertions reinforces both the possibilities and the complications of the issue. The determinative role of Scripture in the reasoned development of Anglican tradition is generally acknowledged, but how the Bible is used in determining the outcome of specific controversies is unclear. Through the twentieth century, processes of rapid social change from pre- to post-modernity have meant that Christians in the same church now find they are living in different cultural worlds, and the ways in which Scripture is utilised in each of them appears to be different as well.
68. Yet during the last decade a renewed emphasis on the unity as well as the diversity of Scripture means that listening to the Bible together can be a restorative as well as disturbing experience for the Christian community. Reading ‘in communion’ includes but goes beyond sharing a common lectionary. It was suggested to us that Thomas Cranmer recognised that the public reading of Scripture in the context of ordered worship permits (and indeed creates) an acceptable degree of diversity in the church. This is something that needs to be rediscovered at this time, since it is recognised that no contemporary ‘Act of Uniformity’ could achieve that end. Corporate reception of Scripture is actually the way in which communion will be nurtured and sustained in the church, as well as described or defined as a theological concept.
69. In the third round of discussion, the question of how the Bible could be read ‘together’ by the whole church was highlighted. Major differences emerged between those who thought that in principle the clarity (‘perspicuity’) of Scripture meant that a common mind could be reached about the meaning and implications of a passage, and others who felt that cultural differences between readers - as well as between readers and the text - meant that any such unanimity would be impossible to achieve. Current hermeneutical studies suggest that such pessimism is unwarranted and that the ideal of a church whose thoughts and actions are moulded by a habitual response to the message of the Bible is worth pursuing. However any expectation that interpretations of Scripture will ever be totally uncontested is discounted by the experience of history, if not the very character of the Bible itself. Knowledge of God’s purposes in Scripture will always be partial in the church, yet it will be sufficient for the patient pursuit of truth and holiness, if there is a corporate willingness to respond to what is understood in particular circumstances.

For this reason methods of cross-cultural and trans-generational reading of the Bible are to be encouraged.

70. Such a pursuit places emphasis on a humble and receptive reading of the text of Scripture. Statement 1 invited reflection on the way Scripture speaks to the whole personality of the reader; the habits of the heart and a culture's heart. Scripture reads us as much as, perhaps even more than, our reading of it, however closely we attempt to understand and interpret its message.
  71. A central passage in this discussion was Luke 24.13-35. In that well known story on the road to Emmaus, two disciples were carrying their own confusions and dashed hopes about Jesus. A stranger joined them and revealed the secret of the Scriptures and sparked their faith and hope. After Jesus revealed himself to them in the breaking of the bread they were able to say "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"(v32). They returned to Jerusalem to join a gathering company of witnesses to the resurrection. Their lives were altered forever in the light of the living Word of God.
  72. Even the most rigorous scrutiny of the text of Scripture must lead towards those moments of transfiguration as Christian disciples realise they are standing and living in the light of God's presence. Engagement with Scripture must be a key component in times of controversy. However the ultimate role of Scripture during disputes within the life of the church is measured not by how far it shows who is 'right', but by the way in which it invites all parties of the controversy to be 'changed'.
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73. **QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *How does the Bible function as a source of authority in setting priorities and resolving disputes in your church?*
  - *How is it possible for Anglicans in different parts of the world to listen to the Bible together?*
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74. **ISSUE 2: Christian Living: The Gospel and Christian Ethics**

- **STATEMENT 2:** Dividing doctrine from ethics not only creates the possibility for serious mistakes in Christian thinking but also diminishes the coherence of the life of holiness which is the Christian vocation.

75. Ethical questions, and especially questions concerning sexuality and holiness are at the centre of Anglican anxieties about communion. The discussion that our study sought to provoke was not limited to matters of sexual behaviour but looked at ways in which all behaviour could be transformed through the Gospel.
76. The Commission introduced this issue to highlight that framework. “In our initial questions to the churches, we asked whether Christian teachings about moral behaviour are integral to the maintenance of communion. The answers we received were overwhelmingly affirmative. And this indeed is our view. What we call ethical teachings are woven into the fabric of Christian doctrine. Christians are called to die to sin and to rise again with Christ into newness of life (Romans 6.4). The doctrines of the resurrection and of baptism contain a teaching about personal transformation. Indeed the very idea of communion is inseparable from holiness of life, a sharing in the very being of God (2 Peter 1.4). It belongs to the integrity of the Church that it teaches the truth that is in Christ Jesus, which is a new way of life (Mark 10.21). That life is no easy option. It involves personal struggle against temptation and a commitment to freedom from oppression. It is taken up truly as a taking-up of the cross (Ephesians 4.20-24). It is a serious mistake to think that ‘core doctrine’ does not include such teaching.”
77. The wider discussion accepted that assertion, and was willing to extend the debate beyond any single presenting issue. Anglicans have repeatedly sought to link personal beliefs with public outcomes. Ongoing interaction (not always amicable) between church and state has been a feature of Anglican order from the earliest period of Christian faith and practice in Britain. It was exemplified in the seventeenth century by the way Richard Hooker sought to integrate the continuity of God’s purposes with radically changed intellectual, social and political circumstances. The Anglican tradition has always seen theology as an agent of moral transformation, and ethical assertions as requiring theological validation. The Christian message is not understood merely as religious ideology but, most directly, by the way it confronts the reality of personal and corporate sin. The Gospel is addressed to a world which both fails to recognise and refuses to acknowledge the goodness and justice of God. Anglican history shows many examples of the conviction that situations of evil are not simply to be confronted but redeemed.
78. This tradition continues today with important Anglican contributions to thinking about international debt, justice and peace issues, and the

HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is no reason why similar attention should not be given to issues of human sexuality, including homosexuality (issues which are intellectual, social and political as much as personal in origin) under the present circumstances in which the Communion finds itself. This will involve more than theoretical considerations: it would ask quite personally and directly, in what way does the Gospel offer good news to Christians with differing sexual orientations. A holistic Anglican tradition will seek to combine the best elements of traditional moral philosophy with the practice of theological ethics, involving spiritual issues of vocation and discernment. This will need first, an appreciation of the interdependence of ‘command ethics’ (in which the central issue is obedience to God’s instructions) and the ethics of ‘human flourishing’ (in which the central issue is the fulfilment of the humanity which God has created). Secondly, attention must be extended to the way in which innovations in Christian belief and practice can be understood, evaluated and judged within an Anglican fellowship. What is not possible is that the discussion of belief and practice, doctrine and ethics, should be carried on independently of each other.

79. The link between belief and behaviour is made particularly clear in the Pauline epistles. Ephesians 4.1-6 provides a case in point. In this passage doctrinal teaching is followed by the ethical imperative of “living a life worthy of the calling you have received”. A life of virtues such as humility, patience and forbearance is the way to maintain harmony and unity within the body of Christ. For the bonds of affection in the Anglican Communion to hold together, sound doctrine, together with ethical living and the practice of the Christian virtues, are both vital.

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80. **Those bonds might be safeguarded if at every level the question is asked:**

- *Where do you see Christian doctrine informing or challenging ethical questions which arise in your own situation?*

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81. **ISSUE 3: Responding to the Gospel where we are: Context and Culture**

- **STATEMENT 3:** The reality of the incarnation implies that the Gospel is always proclaimed in specific cultures. Inculturation always runs the risk of syncretism, in all cultures, without exception. One of the gifts which comes from membership of the

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Anglican Communion is that other Provinces hold up a mirror to each of us, enabling us to question whether the Gospel has been compromised among us.

82. 'Particular and national churches' inevitably display characteristics of their own cultural heritage and are called to bear their witness within those settings. This creates a tension between affirming and critiquing the social setting in which they find themselves. It can also cause problems in the relationship between different churches as they seek to understand how Christians in a different environment are trying to work out appropriate responses to remain faithful to the Gospel. This tension between the one and the many in the Anglican Communion is one potential source of misunderstanding which needs to be acknowledged.
83. The theological motif of the incarnation is important for understanding the issue of 'inculturation', and the Commission's discussion began there. However, as that discussion broadened, other themes - centred around the Pentecost experience - began to emerge.
84. So, the invitation to discuss the third statement began: "The incarnation of Jesus Christ is God's self-revelation to the world. Jesus' ministry on earth included both the acceptance of a particular culture and a moral confrontation with elements in that culture. When Jesus in turn commissioned his disciples, they too were to pursue the mission which the Holy Spirit would give them by relating to their society incarnationally. The theological concept of inculturation denotes the process whereby the church becomes incarnated in a particular culture of a people".
85. "Inculturation occurs when dialogue is sought at the level of trust between Christian message and praxis *vis-à-vis* local beliefs and values. Thus, as Christianity carries the structures and theology of the church into the conversation, so the same must grow out of local symbols, and, in so doing maintain the cultural and spiritual integrity of the local people. Inculturation, properly understood, is openness to a way whereby the Christian Gospel is interpreted and reinterpreted in an ongoing process of faithful reciprocity among peoples in the different contexts and cultures of the global church.
86. "However, inculturation is not limited to religious cultural beliefs and practices. In its broadest sense, it includes all endeavours aimed at making the Christian message relevant to the local context. It is also an interaction and integration of the Christian message and socio-political and economic reality. True inculturation entails a willingness to

incorporate what is positive, and to challenge what is alien to the truth of the Christian faith. It has to make contact with the psychological as well as the intellectual characteristics of the people. This is achieved through openness to innovation and experimentation, an encouragement of local creativity, and a readiness to reflect critically at each stage of the process - a process that, in principle is never ending.”

87. Contributors to this debate agreed that the historicity and particularity of Anglican understandings of the church means that it takes questions of context seriously. At its best - as in the 1978 Lambeth Conference treatment of inculturation - context and culture are considered within the framework of catholicity. It involves a two-fold encounter, during which the church discovers something about its own inner reality as a community of the resurrection, and also discovers resources for attending to the needs of the world. Consequently Anglicans are always open to the possibilities of a ‘local option’ in the way they fulfil their calling, but will insist that the ‘local’ is held in a dialectic tension with ‘universal’ opinion, as far as that can be ascertained.
88. This interplay between the many and the one follows directly from the theological model outlined in the previous paragraph. It emphasises the way in which the grace of the covenant is constant, yet renewed, restored and realised throughout the pilgrimage of God’s people as they move towards its completion. The once-for-all character of Christ’s coming must be appropriated by succeeding generations in each and every place. On this understanding the dominant theme of inculturation is not just that of *incarnation* (as is often assumed and was so assumed at the beginning of this discussion) but an implication of the *Pentecost* experience - hearing about the scandalously particular works of God in the mother tongue of new converts, who are thereby incorporated into membership of a single multi-cultural and cross-generational community.
89. On that basis it might be argued that the Anglican experience of companionship links, partnerships in mission, inter-Anglican networks, mission societies and religious orders (not to mention the availability of cheap air travel and the Internet) can all act as significant ‘instruments of communion’, almost irrespective of more formal ecclesial structures. These partnerships take on increasing importance, theological as well as practical, at a time of temporary disruption in the relationship between different parts of the Anglican world. Reflection on these relationships may begin to provide theological articulation to new dimensions of *koinonia* which are emerging in the new world- (and church-) order.

90. In the passage suggested for reflection on the issue, Acts 17.16 - 34, Paul is seen to be proclaiming and making relevant the Christian message in a local context. Within this encounter he recognised a particular cultural symbol which he used in two ways. First, to provide a point of contact between the Christian message and local people. But second, to present an implicit challenge to assumptions which make it difficult for that message to be received and understood.
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91. **QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *What are the issues in your own cultural situation which need to be reconsidered in the light of the Gospel?*
  - *How do you think the genuine and meaningful expressions of communion that your church experiences with Anglican Christians in other parts of the world will be able to survive current disagreements in the Anglican Communion?*
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92. **ISSUE 4: The Limits of Diversity: Encountering Disputes and Failures**

- **STATEMENT 4:** Since the beginning of Christianity disputes have arisen in which the truth of the Gospel is seen to be at stake. Not all disputes are of such significance, but some are. In a Communion made up of many different churches, discernment is required to identify what in any particular context are the crucial issues for the life of the church.
93. Introducing this issue, the Commission commented: “Identifying what disputes are significant in the Church is a longstanding challenge in Christianity. The Scriptures themselves bear witness to varieties of understanding within the people of God. This diversity of interpretation has sometimes given rise to lively disputes: for instance, in the Hebrew Scriptures, about the obligations of the covenant, both for God and for Israel, or in the New Testament about the demand that Gentile converts to faith in Christ should be circumcised in accord with the law. In some such conflicts, fidelity to the covenant, or to the Gospel, was seen to be at stake. In others, legitimate diversity of interpretation is reflected in the diversity of scriptural witness: for instance, in the Hebrew Scriptures there are two versions, with differing emphases, of the pre-exilic history of Israel, and in the New Testament there are four gospels, which give four distinctive perspectives on Jesus and the Gospel”.

94. “We can therefore expect diversity of practice and of theological interpretation to continue within a communion of churches, especially when the individual churches are reading the Scriptures and practising the Christian faith in hugely different contexts and circumstances. Even within the New Testament, it is clear that some Christians thought others were not being faithful to the Gospel and, on the issue of circumcision, a council was held at Jerusalem to resolve the issue. From the beginning, conciliar processes and conciliar decision-making have enabled the Church to identify those issues on which unity must be maintained and to reaffirm its faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, often in innovative ways. Within the conciliar process, an openness to the fresh reading of Scripture and of Christian tradition, together with a willingness to listen to one another and so to what the Spirit may now be saying to the churches, has been vital to the faithful proclamation of the Gospel in changing circumstances.”
95. Throughout the biblical narrative and the history of the church, decisive choices have been made about significant issues of Christian faith, order and practice. Such a demand means that there is always a possibility of serious disagreement in the church. Some disputes are peripheral, and differences of opinion about them can be accepted relatively easily, but some are crucial - and must in due course be decided upon, if the church is to retain its unity, holiness and claim of catholicity. In times of controversy, vital questions arise about how to tell the difference between peripheral or local disputes, and those which are crucial, normative and universal.
96. In the present debate on human sexuality many participants are looking for a list of fundamental doctrines which guarantee Anglican identity, or for a catalogue of acceptable practices, ‘lines in the sand’, which define the limits of Anglican fellowship. The Commission is persuaded that while numerous attempts have been made by Anglican theologians to identify core doctrines or fundamental articles, that quest has never been settled beyond dispute. In the present intellectual climate it is even clearer that such a strategy would conceal still more foundational problems of authority. Who decides the content and extent of such doctrines? And how could they be used to resolve contentious issues in the life of the Communion?
97. In situations of dispute it is not possible to exclude any area of human life or behaviour from theological scrutiny: any issue can become crucial for the maintenance of the church’s faithfulness. The example of flags being displayed in the sanctuary of a church is an instructive case

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which has been considered by the Commission. In some situations that would be regarded as amongst peripheral issues (*adiaphora*) - until, for instance, such a time when the flags bore a swastika and the churches concerned were in Nazi Germany. Some members have pointed to other situations when a flag can represent the threat of 'unopposed Empire' or xenophobic nationalism. Such examples illustrate the way in which previously unconsidered things, in a changed context, can present vital challenges to Christian confession. Key questions for the church's faithfulness today have to do with human sexual activity, that of hetero- as well as homosexual orientation.

98. Despite its reluctance, *a priori*, to exclude any opinion or practice, Anglicanism is not in principle unable or unwilling to make costly decisions. Indeed decisive points in the establishment of Anglican 'communion' presume that the discernment of God's will and purposes is a constant and ongoing process. Thus the historic standards of Anglicanism (The Thirty-nine Articles, Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal) can be seen as a covenantal expression of the way in which English Christians established their own identity among the controversies of the 16th and 17th centuries. The Lambeth Quadrilateral does not (as it is sometimes erroneously supposed) define the boundaries of Anglican fellowship, but it did commit Anglicanism in the 19th century to a series of normative practices whereby the wider unity of the church might be furthered: Scripture is *read*, tradition *received*, sacramental worship is *offered*, and the historic character of apostolic leadership is *retained*. From this interplay the Anglican community is nurtured and sustained.
99. A Scripture passage that commends itself for reflection in relation to this discussion is Acts 15.1-35. This text indicates that disputes and dissensions of a theological and doctrinal nature were quite common from the first days of the church. The matter of circumcision being essential for salvation could have turned away many believers from Christian faith and the church. Such issues could only be resolved through face-to-face meetings. This passage is very important because the Anglican Communion is also struggling with many challenges to its unity, fellowship and theology.

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100. **QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *In what ways can church councils, synods, bishops and theologians be seen to maintain a balance between faithfulness to common*

*belief and effective engagement with changing local circumstances?*

- *If a covenant is more than a constitution, what implications does this have for decision-making by churches that are in covenantal relationship with each other?*
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**101. ISSUE 5: Life with Others: Accountability and Competence**

- **STATEMENT 5:** Disputes in the church may be on many issues. Issues of discipline, such as church teaching on sexuality or the recognition of ministerial orders may be important in some contexts: specific issues of poverty, justice and peace in others. Attention to the concerns of other churches within the Communion is important for putting those of each local church into a proper perspective.
102. In what is often a media-led world, some controversies gain disproportionate attention. It is not necessarily those who shout loudest who are attending to the most important issues. On this statement, the Commission commented: “We recognise the importance of addressing together the issue of human sexuality, and of homosexual practice in particular. It has become for many a church-dividing issue. For others the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate still lingers as a crisis of faith. For still others, the persistence of white supremacy stifles the spirit of Communion. We also weigh the importance of the world-wide distribution of wealth, issues of justice in varying contexts, and the goals of peace and the cessation of violence. Often the developed world puts its own hot-button issues in the forefront and misses other equally important issues, such as global warming. Our Communion serves us when it puts all the issues on the table, omitting none.”
103. However this implies a mutual accountability concerning the things that are contentious amongst us. The Commission had already advocated the importance of mutual accountability (*paraklesis*) for the maintenance of communion in the church.<sup>20</sup> This involves comfort, encouragement, exhortation and direction, as well as the word into which it is usually translated, ‘admonition’. It is something which should function at every level of church life, and there seems no reason why, in a fellowship of autonomous churches, such accountability should not be exercised between as well as within each of them. The problem that has become clear during current controversies is that it is uncertain where

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responsibility for *paraklesis* within the world-wide Communion lies, or when it is appropriate for such an exercise to be undertaken.

104. To clarify *when* some communion-wide decision is to be made, we have introduced the criteria of *intensity*, *substance* and *extent*:<sup>21</sup> the more these characteristics feature in a controversy, the wider the scope for a ministry of mutual admonition. As to *where* that decision should be made, it is held that the current dispute deserves consideration at the level of a relationship between Provinces, at present embodied in the Primates' Meeting. The Primates have been reluctant to accept the 'enhanced' role that successive Lambeth Conferences have urged upon them, but in October 2003 they indicated that they were looking for an appropriate mechanism to fulfil that sort of role. Some way may need to be found by which all the instruments of communion, acting together, can make binding judgements to undergird and secure the unity of the churches and enrich their communion of service and love. It must be clear that this should not be seen as a bureaucratic or merely organisational response to resolving disputes. A decision by the Primates should not be reduced to the outcome of a majority vote of the personal opinions - for the time being - of those present. The process is one of theological discernment throughout, and 'admonition' should not be seen as a matter of institutional censure, but corporate submission to the Gospel, in the pursuit of a common mind.
105. For various reasons, some participants in the present debates seem intent on loosening the links in the Communion by speaking of it in terms of a confederation, or becoming 'cousins, not brothers and sisters' in Christ. Others have suggested that a constructive way forward may be to allow a form of associate status within the Communion. These proposals seem to amount to a refusal to accept the possibility of external criticism; theologically, they dilute Anglican fellowship from something grounded in covenant love, to a matter of historic association.
106. A passage for reflection might be II Corinthians 1.23-2.11. There is obviously tension in this passage between the Apostle Paul and the church at Corinth and also in the church over the behaviour of one member. It raises questions about dealing with disputes, administering discipline and discerning the appropriate pastoral response. It is also an example of wisdom coming from the voice of the apostle from beyond the local situation.

107. A **QUESTION** for discussion might be:

- *How far can membership of a Communion of churches help a local church to discern what are the crucial issues in its own situation?*
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108. **ISSUE 6: Dispute Resolution: Finding Appropriate Structures**

- **STATEMENT 6:** At every level, the practice of *koinonia* requires that there are those who have the responsibility to arbitrate in disputes and conflicts vital to our shared life. Such arbitration gains its force from the ties that bind us together in a voluntary communion. The church then, needs to develop structures for testing, reconciliation and restraint.
109. The Commission commented: “We should not be surprised when conflicts and disputes occur in the church. Such things arise for many reasons, for example, failure of communication, misunderstandings, jealousy etc. Conflict also occurs because of the sheer richness of the Gospel of Christ and the difficulty of deciding amidst a number of possibilities what is the faithful way forward in a particular situation.
110. “In a voluntary society like the church we rely heavily on the ties that bind us together as the body of Christ to help us find a way of resolving our differences and disputes. The church places a high premium on face-to-face relations as the natural means through which it tries to discern what is right, test disputed practices and exercise discipline. Conflict resolution and the kinds of sanctions exercised in the church are thus primarily persuasive rather than those of a coercive and judicial kind.”
111. However, this does not mean that arbitration can be avoided in disputed areas at a level appropriate to the strength and extent of the dispute. Indeed, the church would be failing in its duty if it did not work hard at all levels of its life - parish, diocese, province, region and beyond - to deal with disputed matters, striving for reconciliation and implementing appropriate sanctions when necessary.
112. The church needs those who will exercise a ministry by which disputes are resolved and structures which allow such arbitration to take place. These structures will be both formal and informal and involve face-to-face relations as befits the community of Jesus Christ. For Anglican unity to be maintained in this way, it will be necessary to overcome deep seated suspicions about centralising power in the Communion. *The Virginia Report* pointed to the need for greater clarity in the relationship between the instruments of communion. This might be achieved by

clearly differentiating the roles of Lambeth Conference, Anglican Consultative Council and Primates' Meeting as aspects of collegial, communal and personal authority in the church, as expounded in the ecumenical statement, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.<sup>22</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury, now identified as the 'focus of unity', holds the unique office of gathering the Communion in its representative parts, and speaking for it while consensus is achieved.

113. The Commission agrees that if any 'enhanced role' were adopted by the Primates then this must be paralleled by additional responsibilities undertaken by each of the other instruments as well. What is essential is that the different charisms of guidance and discernment exercised by each of the instruments must deliberately and consistently act together. Too often meetings of the decision-making bodies appear to outsiders to be preoccupied with their own, apparently unrelated, programme objectives; at worst, they seem intent on merely winning time, in the hope that seemingly intractable problems will go away. Mutual accountability and communication are needed for communion to function. A personal, and even more, a theological vocabulary of disagreement is necessary in order to allow communication to continue across frontiers of disagreement. A key to this will be found by establishing a common language of collegiality to unite the episcopate, along with an agreed understanding of what is implied when that collegiality is broken or impaired. The working of the whole body must amount to more than the sum of its separate parts. The purpose of 'dispersed authority' is to draw to itself the *consensus fidelium*.
114. The above process of listening, responding, reflecting and questioning, points to the dynamic aspect of communion in the body of Christ. Communion is not a steady state reality that one either has or does not have. It has to be nurtured through open and persistent conversation where there is mutual trust and forbearance, always thinking the best of the other, always hoping and praying for new ways of sharing in the riches of the Gospel. Sustaining communion is in fact a continual consultative process. It is through such an endeavour that the Lord of the Church is graciously present and calling the church onward and upward.
115. A passage for reflection might be Matthew 18.15-17. In this passage Jesus offers guidance for a community dealing with sin and failure of one of its members. There are aspects of this teaching that are particularly helpful for the life of the Anglican Church. Most clearly there is an expectation of face-to-face relationships at all levels of dispute resolution.

**116. QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *How are disputes addressed and conflicts resolved in the practice of your church?*
- *What sort of language (theological or otherwise) is appropriate for speaking about Christian people with whom you disagree?*

***Conclusion to Part III***

117. This section has sought to capture insights which progressively unfolded throughout our consultative study of communion. We do not believe that such a summary exhausts all that can be said about the issues it has raised. Indeed, the hope of the Commission is that further clarification of these issues will be found as churches and groups continue to utilise the material from the study as found in Appendix One. What is recorded above might be seen as a ‘worked exercise’ from that process at a particular period of time, and what follows represents our conclusions to the process, as far as it has been taken.

## PART IV

### CONCLUSION: Hope in Communion

#### *Changing Patterns of Communion*

118. The Windsor Report 2004 has pointed towards some ways to hold the Communion together at this time. Our study supports the contention that the future life of the Communion will depend on a renewed sense of commonality. Our communion will be enriched as we work at resolving our conflicts through the continuing process of faithful Christian living to which the Anglican tradition aspires. This has to be undertaken within the brokenness of the body of Christ.
119. Part of the difficulty in sustaining that vision is derived from hierarchical views of power and authority, so prominent in social, managerial and political life. These are pressed on the decision-making bodies both by an uncomprehending media, and by knowing manipulation and abuse of power within the church itself. An emphasis on the life of communion and the work of the Spirit seeks a different frame of reference, such as that in the classic discussions of the Anglican Communion at the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences. In the second of these, two prevailing types of ecclesiastical organisation were described: “that of centralised government, and that of regional autonomy within one fellowship”.<sup>23</sup> It is the latter form which Anglicans share with Orthodox churches and others. Self-governing churches of the Communion grew up “freely, on their own soil”.<sup>24</sup> This has contributed, at provincial level, to limitations of self-understanding and of understanding about the demands of communion within the world-wide fellowship of churches. Hence our focus on catholicity. We have sought to explain the need for the gifts of the Spirit - and for virtues such as patience, humility, trust and hope - in sustaining a conversation with one another despite the current serious conflict within the Anglican Communion. This is why we have spoken of dynamic catholicity.

#### *Growth in Communion*

120. At this time of uncertainty the possibility of serious disruption to the life of the Anglican Communion has to be contemplated. The question must be asked whether existing ‘instruments of communion’ are capable of theological (not just managerial) development so that they can utilise the possibilities opened up by the Windsor process to address questions

about legitimate diversity and unity. If there is not the time or will to achieve this, it appears that Anglicans will become increasingly marginalised and fragmented as a movement within world Christianity.

121. Even if the worst fears of Anglicans who value their fellowship and solidarity are realised, the Anglican tradition will not disappear. Communion functions at a number of different levels. IATDC has identified theology, canon law, history and culture, communication, and voluntary commitment rather than coercion, as essential aspects of communion. Yet real communion can exist in many of the elements separately. The Commission is persuaded that ‘thick’ ecclesiology, concrete experience of the reconciling and healing work of God in Christ, should take priority over ‘thin’, abstract and idealised descriptions of the church. Communion ‘from below’, is real communion - arguably the most vital aspect of *koinonia* with God and neighbour, and it is from ‘below’ that the Commission has worked in its conversations with the churches, and in its reflections in this report.
122. What is needed now is a clearer understanding of how these different aspects of communion co-exist at different levels or horizons of the church’s experience. The obligation to seek ‘the highest degree of communion possible’ within the church is a laudable ambition, a vocation even. Yet unless we are clear what sort of communion is anticipated for congregational, local, regional or global fellowship, the terminology can be used merely to justify higher level organisational arrangements without ever analysing how they contribute to communion itself. It may well be that communion at a local or congregational level (“where two or three are gathered together...”) may theologically represent a ‘higher’ communion than an ideal expressed in merely institutional, canonical or juridical terms. At the same time it must be insisted that the experience and commitments of local communities will be enlarged and maintained by participation in wider expressions of fellowship (which the parallel work of this Commission on ‘The Anglican Way: The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church’, to be found in Appendix Two, advances) just as the life of dioceses, provinces and the Anglican Communion itself pursues its fullness as a part of the *koinonia* of the People of God.
123. If Anglican fellowship at the level of shared doctrines and ideals or common participation in mission is unable to enjoy the support of coherent global structures, then the Anglican Communion will be immeasurably weakened. In the light of the Gospel weak and fragile things are not to be despised. Talk of broken communion has often been

a form of exchange to gain rhetorical advantage and carries with it an all too facile notion of communion in the church. Such a notion glosses over far too lightly the actual brokenness of the church community. It also eclipses the vocation of each individual and community to walk in the steps of the crucified Christ. The Anglican theological tradition cannot be content with any claim to communion which separates the Gospel of Christ from the aspiration of faithful Christian discipleship within a Communion which is both diverse and united, broken and being restored.

### *Hope in Communion*

124. Hope in communion has a double meaning in the context of this report. In the first instance the report points to ways in which Christian hope in the possibility of life together might be nurtured and enhanced. This relates to a fundamental commitment to conciliar processes which maintain face-to-face engagements through times of conflict and division. We continue to persist in the hope that working and believing together in the service of the Gospel is an indestructible feature of the faith we cherish. We have set our hope on Christ and so we hope in the communion to which we are called.
125. In the second instance we hope in communion in the sense that hope itself is only made real as we share together in the mission of God in the world. Hope in Christ is kept alive and burning within us as we participate together in the sharing of the Gospel. Hope is fractured when we separate from our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hope grows as communion is widened and intensified. At this time of conflict Anglicans are faced with a costly and difficult journey. However, we have together accepted the Gospel invitation to take up the cross and follow the upward call of Christ in faith and hope and love.



## APPENDIX ONE

### *The Communion Study as an Educational Resource*

The study process which gave rise to the foregoing report should have continuing relevance in building communion in the church, at local and parochial as well as diocesan and provincial levels. For convenience, the essential questions and issues for debate are listed below, in the hope that groups will follow through the process for themselves, and come to their own conclusion about the nature and sustaining of communion. Enrichment of such local studies may be gained by referring to the Report itself, and to summaries of the communion-wide discussions, which can be found on the Anglican Communion website.

### *Four Key Questions for Anglicans World-Wide*

- When we speak of the Anglican Communion, what do we mean by the word “communion”?
- What is it that makes some disputes so crucial that failure to resolve them threatens a break in communion?
- In what ways are Christian teachings about moral behaviour integral to the maintenance of communion?
- In answering these questions we shall be asking how far does the Virginia Report meet the relevant situations that have arisen in the Anglican Communion since its publication?

From an exploration of what the concept of ‘communion’ actually means to Anglicans today, it is necessary to turn to a consideration of some of the underlying issues which make communion problematic for a world-wide Christian fellowship.

### *The Six Propositions (or Statements) for debate*

#### **Proposition 1:**

The *koinonia* of the Anglican Communion is both greatly enriched, and at times challenged and confused, by the variety of ways of encountering scripture. We bring our whole lives, in our different cultural and personal contexts, to scripture, and from those places open ourselves to ‘being read by’ scripture.

**Proposition 2:**

Dividing doctrine from ethics not only creates the possibility for serious mistakes in Christian thinking but also diminishes the coherence of the life of holiness which is the Christian vocation.

**Proposition 3:**

The reality of the incarnation implies that the Gospel is always proclaimed in specific cultures. Inculturation always runs the risk of syncretism, in all cultures without exception. One of the gifts which comes from membership of the Anglican Communion is that other Provinces hold up a mirror to each of us, enabling us to question whether the gospel has been compromised among us.

**Proposition 4:**

Since the beginning of Christianity disputes have arisen in which the truth of the Gospel is seen to be at stake. Not all disputes are of such significance, but some are. In a Communion made up of many different churches, discernment is required to identify what in any particular context are the crucial issues for the life of the church.

**Proposition 5:**

Disputes in the church may be on many issues. Issues of discipline, such as church teaching on sexuality or the recognition of ministerial orders may be important in some contexts: specific issues of poverty, justice and peace in others. Attention to the concerns of other churches within the Communion is important for putting those of each local church into a proper perspective.

**Proposition 6:**

At every level, the practice of *koinonia* requires that there are those who have the responsibility to arbitrate in disputes and conflicts vital to our shared life. Such arbitration gains its force from the ties that bind us together in a voluntary communion. The church then, needs to develop structures for testing, reconciliation and restraint.

After discussing some principles underlying issues of communion that are faced by Anglicans today, it is important to address some of the practicalities involved.

***Four further questions for clarification***

1. Anglicanism has always given a high place to the reading of Scripture as the ground of its worship and teaching. How is it possible for Anglicans in different parts of the world to listen to the Bible together?
2. The IATDC and the Windsor Report are both emphasising the notion of ‘covenant’ as a basis and expression of communion. If a covenant is more than a constitution, what implications does this have for decision-making by churches that are in a covenantal relationship with each other?
3. How do you think the genuine and meaningful expressions of communion that your church experiences with Anglican Christians in other parts of the world will be able to survive current disagreements in the Anglican Communion?
4. What sort of language (theological and otherwise) is appropriate for speaking about Christian people with whom you disagree?



## APPENDIX TWO

### THE ANGLICAN WAY: The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church

Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission,  
October 2007<sup>25</sup>

#### *Preamble*

At this time in the life of the global Anglican Communion tensions and rifts between Provinces - and bishops - have seriously impaired the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the baptised. The reasons for these difficulties are complex and no one would imagine that it is an easy matter to restore fellowship across the churches of the Communion. In such circumstances we can forget that our life together is a gracious gift bestowed by the Lord. It is a gift that serves the mission of God in the world and has a direct effect on the integrity and power of our witness to the gospel.

How can we proclaim one Lord, one faith and one baptism when the gift of *koinonia* seems to be so easily set aside for a supposedly greater goal? What can be more fundamental to our life on earth than our essential interconnectedness with others and the world.<sup>26</sup> What can be more at the heart of Christian life than the sacrament of communion in Christ's body broken for us and blood poured out for the world? This *koinonia* is given by God in creation and renewed in Christ and the Spirit. It is a gift which subsists in the whole body of Christ prior to its embodiment in an 'instrument of unity' or particular ecclesial office. Furthermore, like all gifts of God, it can only be a blessing as it is faithfully received and shared by all. It is critical for this truth to be grasped by an often anxious and fearful church that is often tempted to seek heroes or managers to heal its inner life.

All ministries are charisms of the Spirit for the building up of the body. This is not just a *role* but charism of the ministry. As eucharistic president and teacher of the faith the bishop lives and ministers as sign and servant of ecclesial communion and communion with the Triune God. Bishops therefore bear a particular responsibility for the maintenance and nurture of communion as God's gift to all.

The ordinal is clear that bishops of the church have a great and grave responsibility to the Lord of the Church for the fellowship of all the baptised. Their actions have consequence for the whole body of the faithful for we are all 'members one of another' (Romans 12.5). Accordingly we offer these ten

theses on the role and responsibilities of bishops for the well-being of the communion of the whole church. In the theses that follow it should be abundantly clear that the nurture of *koinonia* is not an optional extra or luxury for the episcopate. Rather, it is of the essence of the sacramental charism of episcopal ordination and serves the baptised who have been called by God to bear witness to the glorious gospel of Christ in a broken and violent world hungry for peace, freedom and healing.

The following theses identify the bishop's ministry in relation to the gifts and responsibilities that nurture and grow communion. We were asked to write a contribution that would be helpful to the programme of the Lambeth Conference 2008. It is not therefore a comprehensive theological treatment of episcopacy.

Thesis one sets the episcopate within the life of the whole church. Theses two to seven identify aspects of the office of bishop. Theses eight to ten focus on the place of the episcopate in the life of the church. Our overall concern is the significance of the episcopate for the maintenance of communion in global Anglicanism. However, we also deal with local, diocesan concerns, recognising that the way a bishop fosters communion at the micro level has implications for the way a bishop contributes to the fellowship of the baptised at the macro level. It will be clear from the theses that follow that the deeper issue concerns not only what a bishop does but who a bishop is for Christ and the people. The significance of the episcopate for the renewal of *koinonia* and mission is directly related to how a bishop bears witness in life and service to the holy and triune God.

### **Thesis One: The bishop serves the *koinonia* of the gospel into which the baptised are incorporated by God the Holy Spirit**

God calls all people into a covenantal relationship of love, mercy and justice. By baptism the people of God become participants in the visible body of Jesus Christ. The bishop is called to serve this communion principally as president within the eucharistic community and by ordering those ministries which build up the body. The eucharistic role endows the bishop with responsibilities of representation, as through this ministry parts of the body are brought into sacramental relationship with each other. The bishop is the focal person who links parishes within a diocese not only to one another but also the diocese to the wider church within the Communion and ecumenically. This fundamental theological truth challenges all parochial conceptions of the episcopate that fail to transcend ethnic, social, and cultural realities in which the episcopate is, by nature, necessarily embedded.

Bishops of the Anglican Communion have primary responsibility for Anglicans. However, the nature of the episcopal office means that bishops are called to lead the church towards a deeper *koinonia* amongst all God's people, and in so doing represent the wider Christian community to the diocese. This universal and ecumenical ministry belongs to the bishop's role as a symbol of unity. Yet this symbol is ambiguous because the church is divided and torn. In this context the bishop is a sign of a broken church looking to its Lord for healing and hope through the power of the Spirit.

**Thesis Two: The bishop's evangelical office of proclamation and witness is a fundamental means by which those who hear the call of God become one in Christ**

Bishops in the Anglican Communion are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and provide oversight for the witness and the mission of the church in all its aspects. This evangelical office of the bishop is founded upon the good news (*evangelion*). The bishop encourages all God's people to be bearers of the good news of Jesus and to practice personal evangelism through words and actions. This evangelical office includes a prophetic element through which the bishop gives voice to the concerns of a world that seeks justice and a creation that needs care and renewal.

The bishop is called to cherish and nurture the evangelical office always bearing in mind 'how beautiful are the feet of the one who brings good news' (Romans 10.15, Isaiah 52.7). At the heart of this witness is a threefold injunction: to know Christ; to know the power of his resurrection; and to enter into the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings (Philippians 3.10). This dimension of the office gives a fundamental unity to all mission. It is enacted in the eucharist where the bishop gathers and sends the people to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. Through this office the kingdom of God expands and people discover their oneness in Christ the Lord and Saviour. Given its centrality for the establishment of communion for all peoples it is clear that the nature and character of the bishop's evangelical office will occupy a significant part of the collegial life of the episcopate.

**Thesis Three: The bishop is a teacher and defender of the apostolic faith that binds believers into one body**

Bishops vow to guard the apostolic faith. The historic succession in the episcopate is a sign of communion with the apostolic church through time and space. As witnesses to the 'faith once delivered to the saints', bishops are expected to be more than guardians intent on preserving orthodoxy; they are looked upon to be teachers who are able to bring the Scriptures and the creeds

of the church to life in the present day. Their effectiveness as teachers will depend upon the strength of their own educational formation and upon their openness to the questions and concerns of their contemporaries. Very often it is when the Christian tradition interacts with new ways of thinking that previously forgotten or unexplored aspects of Christian truth are disclosed. Growth in theological understanding thus requires a lively memory of the Christian inheritance and capacity to use this to interpret new facts and fresh experiences. In this interaction new insights arise for faith. A bishop's vocation as a teacher is intertwined in a life of prayer and spiritual discipline. This is the crucible in which wisdom is formed and courage found to apply it to everyday life.

Bishops have a special responsibility to encourage attempts to translate the historic faith into the language, ideas and stories of the people. The aim of this is to foster a genuine inculturation that produces both worship and theology that are accessible to the people. Unless this happens the gospel is not understood, the church does not put down deep roots, and communion is weakened as apostolic teaching is misunderstood and distorted. When it does happen, the flourishing of true faith fosters genuine communion across cultures.

In licensing clergy and lay workers, bishops signify that those whom they license are faithful ministers of the Word that gathers and sends the people of God. This means that they must be well equipped theologically for this ministry and mission. The bishop must ensure appropriate theological education and ministerial formation for the diocese. Bishops do well to raise up and support the work of theologians within their dioceses, and to make continuing theological education a high priority for their clergy and lay leaders. A scripture-formed people needs teachers and theologians to help build up the faith of the community and provide resources for the discernment of the Spirit in times of confusion and spiritual hunger.

### **Thesis Four: The bishop has oversight (*episcopo*) of the household of God for the good order of the church**

Bishops are commissioned and sent to be stewards or overseers of God's household within their jurisdiction. They call the people of God into the full expression of the diverse gifts and ministries given by the Holy Spirit. They oversee processes of discernment and selection of candidates for holy orders, ensuring they are well prepared for their ministries, supporting them pastorally and practically, and providing for the good order of ministry in the diocese.

Oversight includes sharing of responsibilities among clergy and lay people. This involves mutual accountability, good communication and willingness to learn from one another. This reciprocity between bishop and people is reflected in the decision making processes of synodical life. This pattern of working together is empowering for all and is a gift to be nurtured at all levels of the life of the church.

The bishop has to ensure the well-being (e.g., spiritual, social, economic) of the diocese in service of its mission. Harnessing resources, fund-raising and financial management of diocesan affairs involves complexities of oversight requiring specialised ministries. Providing *episcope* in this area highlights the administrative and managerial character of the work of a bishop, somewhat akin to a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a large organisation. Bishops ought not to underestimate the distorting effects on their oversight of management models associated with the global market economy. This can lead to a management ethos focussed on strategic plans, goal setting, tasks, competition and successful outcomes. This is appealing because it seems to offer clarity and control but the price is often loss of the personal and relational dimension of ecclesial life. The bishop who manages well is one who is aware of the danger of management becoming the basic lens through which *episcope* is practised. This issue raises a question of how bishops handle matters across diocesan and provincial boundaries. At these levels even *koinonia* may become a thing to be ‘managed’ at a distance (i.e., avoiding face-to-face relations) rather than resolutely pursued together with patience.

**Thesis Five: The bishop is called to co-ordinate the gifts of the people of God for the building up of the faithful for the furtherance of God’s mission**

The bishop has the duty of co-ordinating and encouraging the gifts and talents of all the baptised. The Spirit gives varieties of gifts to all God’s people to build up the church for mission. In the secular context of many cultures, success in life is mostly determined against a background of ruthless competition and individualism. In the church ‘we are all members one of another’ (Romans 12.5), and gifts are not the property of any one person but reside in the whole body for the purpose of strengthening the church to serve God’s mission.

Sometimes bishops - like all people - are threatened by the gifts of their brothers and sisters in Christ. They can become jealous, guarding all power and responsibility to themselves, and thereby thwarting the work of the Holy Spirit. Personal prayer and discernment of one’s own gifts, however, turns

one to the nurture of the gifts of others. When a bishop's life is marked by joy in the ministry of others that bishop will be able to share in ministry with other bishops in a non-competitive and generous manner. This is a key to the building of *koinonia* beyond the local diocese. Specialised training in team building and collaborative leadership is critical.

**Thesis Six: The bishop serves the *koinonia* of the gospel through care, encouragement and discipline of the pastors of the church**

To facilitate care of the people of God is fundamental to the episcopal office. To do this the bishop has, so far as is possible, to know and be known by all. Face-to-face relationships of generosity and graciousness are vital for this is where trust is nurtured. Communion in Christ involves sharing in holy friendship, in counsel, prayer and guidance as well as visitation of parishes on special occasions, such as confirmation.

It is clearly not feasible for a bishop to be able to get to know everyone personally. However, the bishop has a special responsibility to care for the pastors who share in the bishop's *episcopate*. Caring for the pastors includes attention to their welfare including practicalities of life as well as their spiritual and vocational health, ensuring continuing ministerial and theological education and ongoing formation. One of the most important ways in which the bishop cares for the pastors is by being an example in the development of habits of self-care and attention to the spiritual disciplines. Such a witness draws people together and raises their sights to new possibilities for freedom in the Spirit.

A bishop's responsibility for the encouragement and discipline of clergy is built upon an exchange of trusts that only comes through patient companionship with others. This is the context in which the bishop can offer guidance and admonition, and call the pastors to honesty, care and mutual accountability. What is true in diocesan life is true at the level of the Communion. Mutual accountability at the international level is the result of a genuinely shared *episcopate*, exchange of trusts and mutual accountability at the diocesan level.

**Thesis Seven: The bishop serves the *koinonia* of the gospel through a ministry of mediation to recall the broken and conflicted body of Christ to its reconciled life in him**

Dealing with conflict is a significant feature of a bishop's work. Most obviously the church is made up of frail and foolish people. The upward call of Christ presumes we are sinners in need of God's grace, forgiveness and

mercy. In this context, *koinonia* is necessarily a partial and vulnerable reality. A bishop's vocation involves tending this *koinonia* through the wise handling of conflict. A ministry of mediation and reconciliation in situations of conflict is relevant at local and wider levels of the church's life. The challenge for bishops is how to harness conflicts so that through this process a deeper *koinonia* in the gospel emerges. Learning to be a reconciler is a life-long task and bishops may benefit greatly from special training in mediation.

**Thesis Eight: The catholicity of the episcopal office connects the baptised across boundaries of culture, class, gender, race and lands and enables the church to realise its oneness in Christ**

Catholicity means that the apostolic faith is expressed in the diverse contexts of the world. The gift of God in Christ is for all people, and the Trinitarian faith expressed in the doctrine and worship of a particular church is to be that of the whole church. The bishop embodies this catholic character of the gospel and through the communion of bishops with each other the communion of the whole people is made possible and real. This also means that a bishop has particular responsibility to strive for a reality in which the eucharist in a diocese is one celebrated by and for the whole church. It is ironic and a cause of sorrow that the sacrament of unity is an occasion of division.

The catholicity of the office means the bishop is an agent of the fullness of the one faith expressed through myriad local forms. Inculturation that is authentic plumbs the heart of the Christian faith. This requires active engagement with the local cultures so that any stumbling blocks to the hearing, receiving and enacting of the Gospel be removed. When this occurs the gifts of the people are harnessed for authentic mission in that time and place. A bishop must truly know the local cultures and values of the people that the bishop has been called to serve and lead. This can be a real challenge, for the bishop is chief pastor within and across particular ethnic, racial, and cultural contexts. Yet in this role the bishop has to ensure that the one catholic faith finds expression through these particular identities without becoming subsumed by them. The catholicity of the office requires a way of life that is constantly in dialogue with others (especially including other bishops) across many boundaries.

Catholicity also means that the decisions that come from any local place are not simply 'local' decisions, but affect all. Bishops have a particular responsibility to bring the church catholic into local processes of discerning the apostolic faith. They also have a responsibility to represent their diocese to the rest of the church, to interpret to the Communion the realities of their

local place. This means explaining not simply the end results of decisions reached, but being able to give theological explanation of the discernment of the Gospel in the culture, and of the catholicity of such decisions. Bishops need the courage and wisdom to be able to hear the voice of others whether within or outside their contexts.

**Thesis Nine: The bishop serves the collegial life of the church through the nurture of strong bonds with bishops of the Anglican Communion and those who share *episcopate* in other Christian churches**

The episcopate is by nature and calling collegial. Each Anglican bishop shares in the *episcopate* of the whole not as though each were a piece of the whole, but as a particular expression of the whole, and as one that cannot exist without the whole. In the first instance this occurs between the bishops in a diocese (i.e., diocesan bishop, assistant and suffragan bishops). Therefore all are called into open relationship with each other in the Communion and with those called to exercise *episcopate* in the wider church. Collegiality means more than working with those with whom one has an affinity. Rather it involves seeing one's ministry not as one's own but as shared with others. At a Provincial level, collegiality involves many practical aspects of co-operative work, study and prayer, and shared responsibility with Synods in Provincial governance. It has particular importance in contexts where the Christian church is in a minority or in a multi-faith context. The patterns of local collegiality-in-communion are a gift to the wider Anglican Communion.

As bishops seek counsel, journey with each other, and pray with and for each other, real relationships grow. But such solidarity is a costly gift. Real relationships are fragile and tainted by sin. If relationships amongst some bishops within a Province are fraught with tensions, refusals of dialogue or other patterns of manipulation undermine collegiality. It is no surprise that these weaknesses show up at the international level. Yet it is of the essence of the episcopate that bishops give themselves over to collegial mutuality in the service of communion. Given the present state of the Anglican Communion it is the special collegial responsibility of the bishop to be at prayer for and with fellow colleagues. This is particularly relevant for those bishops who are in conflict with one another. Their failure to attend fervently to this ordinal vow weakens the body of Christ for which they have responsibility. This in turn weakens the bonds all the baptised share with one another.

**Thesis Ten: A diocesan bishop is given responsibility for *episcopate* in the particular place where the bishop is principal pastor**

It is important for the coherence of the mission of the church that in one place there should be only one principal or chief pastor. Within particular and complex circumstances (for example, where indigenous people have been subjugated), it may be necessary, with the consent of the chief pastor, to provide a specific pastoral ministry of support to a section of a population. However, sight should never be lost of the desirability that a Christian church in a particular place should be a single assembly of people of all kinds.

There are occasions when a church falls out of sympathy with its bishop on a matter of doctrine or conduct. It must not be the case that the mere fact of ease of modern communication and travel becomes the excuse for choosing a leader in another territory to be one's chief pastor. In the case of serious and extensive conflict, it becomes the duty of a diocesan bishop to provide pastoral support in particular congregations. When a diocesan bishop fails to undertake this duty the matter becomes a provincial responsibility.

***Conclusion***

The theses outlined above cover a broad range of episcopal responsibilities. There will undoubtedly be matters that have not been dealt with that are significant for bishops in the exercise of their daily office. The intention throughout has been to reflect on the nature of the episcopate in relation to the issue of communion. This focus has been explored at the diocesan level and in relation to the Communion. We are convinced that how a bishop handles the complex and delicate issues surrounding the *koinonia* of the church at the local level of the diocese will influence the way a bishop nurtures communion beyond the diocese.

We have tried to offer a brief outline for a theology of the episcopate that is grounded in the received wisdom from scripture and tradition and also alive to the realities that bishops face as they serve the church's *koinonia* in the gospel. Where relevant we have also tried to indicate areas that might become subject of training and professional development for bishops. More detailed work is currently being conducted in this area by other bodies in the Communion.

We offer this present document as a work in progress. We hope that we have provided a small resource to promote discussion and learning concerning the character of the episcopate. Throughout the diversity of episcopal practices, attitudes and ways of leadership we wonder if there might be room for reflection on the idea of an 'episcopal character' along similar lines to what

## Appendix Two

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has been referred to as the 'baptismal character'? We hope and pray that the bishops of the Anglican Communion may find it useful in their difficult but sacred calling to serve the Lord of the Church who desires that all may be one in Jesus Christ.

## **The meetings of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission**

**2001**

September

Marie Reparatrice Retreat Centre  
Wimbledon, England

**2002**

October

Virginia Theological Seminary  
USA

**2003**

September

Virginia Theological Seminary  
USA

**2006**

September

St Julian's Retreat Centre  
Limuru, Kenya

**2007**

September

Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia

## The membership of the Commission and meetings attended

- **The Rt Revd Professor Stephen Sykes**, Church of England, Chair (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **Mrs Clare Amos**, Anglican Communion Office, Acting Secretary (07)
- **The Very Revd Dr Victor Atta-Baffoe**, Church of the Province of West Africa (01, 02, 06, 07)
- **The Rt Revd John Baycroft**, Anglican Communion Office, Secretary (02)
- **The Revd Canon Gregory Cameron**, Anglican Communion Office, Secretary (03, 06)
- **The Rt Revd Dr Samuel R Cutting**, Church of North India (06, 07)
- **The Revd Dr Kortright Davis**, Church in the Province of the West Indies (02, 03)
- **The Rt Revd Dr J Mark Dyer**, The Episcopal Church (02, 03)
- **The Rt Revd Tan Sri Dr Lim Cheng Ean**, Church of the Province of South East Asia (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Revd Professor Joseph Galgalo**, Anglican Church of Kenya (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **The Revd Canon David Hamid**, Anglican Communion Office, Secretary (01)
- **The Revd Dr Bruce Kaye**, Anglican Church of Australia (02, 06, 07)
- **Professor Esther Mombo**, Anglican Church of Kenya (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **The Rt Revd Dr Matthew Owadayo**, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (01, 02, 06)
- **The Revd Canon Luke Pato**, Anglican Church of Southern Africa (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Rt Revd Associate Professor Stephen K Pickard**, Anglican Church of Australia (01, 02, 03, 06, 07 Acting Chair)
- **The Rt Revd Paul Richardson**, Church of England (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Revd Professor Nicholas Sagovsky**, Church of England (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **Dr Eileen Scully**, Anglican Church of Canada (02, 03, 06, 07)
- **Dr Jennie Te Paa**, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia (02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Revd Canon Philip H E Thomas**, Church of England, Assistant to the Chair (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)

- **The Rt Revd Dr N Thomas Wright**, Church of England (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **The Very Revd Dr Paul Zahl**, The Episcopal Church (02, 03)
- **The Rt Revd Héctor Zavala**, Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America (02, 03, 06, 07)

#### Observers

- **Mrs Clare Amos**, Anglican Communion Office (06)
- **Mr Wen Ge**, China Christian Council (07)
- **The Revd Dr A Katherine Grieb**, The Virginia Theological Seminary (02, 03, 06)
- **The Revd Canon Philip Groves**, Anglican Communion Office (06)

#### Administrative Staff

- **Mrs Christine Codner**, Anglican Communion Office (01, 02)
- **Ms Frances Hiller**, Anglican Communion Office (01, 02)
- **Ms Gill Harris-Hogarth**, Anglican Communion Office (06)
- **The Revd Terrie Robinson**, Anglican Communion Office (03, 06, 07)



## Endnotes

1. Cf *The Windsor Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), Foreword, p.11
2. Our initial approach sought to engage the Anglican Primates, dioceses and theological institutions as our primary conversation partners in order to gain properly representative opinion from within an episcopally ordered family, but we also extended this partnership to any individuals and groups who were interested.
3. Committee Report on ‘The Anglican Communion’ in *Lambeth Conference 1948* (London: SPCK, 1948), p.85
4. *Ibid*, p.84
5. *Ibid*
6. *Ibid*, p.85
7. Stephen Pickard offered a paper to the Commission on ‘innovation’ in theology which has since appeared as ‘Innovation and Undecidability: some implications for the Koinonia of the Anglican Church’, *Journal of Anglican Studies* 2/2 (2004), pp.87-105.
8. *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1936)
9. London: Church House Publishing, 1986
10. *Ibid*, Preface, p.1
11. *Ibid*, para 58
12. *Ibid*, para 94
13. *Ibid*, para 95
14. *Women in the Anglican Episcopate* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998)
15. *The Virginia Report* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), Introduction p.3
16. Lambeth 1988 Resolution 18.1
17. *The Virginia Report*, 2/17, p.11
18. Ramsey, p.220. (Such a view might see the church as the new Israel: those who ‘struggle with God’ cf. Genesis 32.22-32.)
19. Ordination of Priests, 1662 BCP. ( See also Psalm 133.)
20. See ‘Reflections offered to the Primates of the Anglican Communion, October 2003’, Available at [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org).

21. Ibid
22. World Council of Churches (1982)
23. Lambeth Conference 1930 (London: SPCK, 1930), p.153
24. Ibid
25. This document on the role of the episcopate in sustaining the unity of the Church was prepared at the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a training document for bishops, particularly with the 2008 Lambeth Conference in view. The original draft was completed at the October 2006 IATDC meeting in Kenya. This was then revised following consultation with other Communion bodies, and completed at the October 2007 IATDC meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
26. The terms '*koinonia*' and 'communion' can become so much a part of the discourse of a fractured and divided church that they lose their force and significance. *Koinonia* has to do with a fundamental connectivity between God, the world, and all living things, including of course human life. The African word '*ubuntu*' captures something of this primary oneness. In the Genesis story human beings are called 'earthlings' or 'groundlings' (Genesis 2). This underscores the fact that we are 'of the earth' and are intrinsically related to other living things, the whole created environment and God. Such *koinonia* is encoded into the very being of creation. The story of redemption is a story of Christ rejoining people, races and the rest of creation. This is the good news which overcomes sin and broken bonds. There is no other community on the earth with a mandate to bear witness to the remarkable miracle of our oneness in the triune God. What is even more remarkable is that God invites the body of Christ to become the new experiment in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Bishops serve this *koinonia* which is nothing less than the way of creation, salvation and the life of the world to come.