

THE AGROS REPORT

**A Report of the
Ecumenical Advisory Group of the Anglican Communion
in preparation for
The Lambeth Conference 1998**

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FOREWORD

This report was presented to ACC-10 Meeting in Panama, October 1996. In response the ACC noted with approval the *Agros Report*.

Since Panama the co-chairs of the dialogues and the ecumenical officers of the Provinces have responded to the request for further developments internationally and locally. In August 1997, a small editorial group met at the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, USA to include these responses and edit this Report.

In the final chapter "challenges to the Bishops at Lambeth 1998" the Ecumenical Advisory Group (EAG) makes some very important recommendations for the future of Anglican ecumenical ministry. Of singular importance among the recommendations is the call for an Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations. This request has already been considered and approved by the ACC10 meeting. Included in this Report in Appendix I is a recommended design for this Commission. New opportunities and challenges that test our fidelity to Christ's prayerful will "that we all may be one, so that the world may believe" require Anglicans to provide adequate structures of mission to meet and fulfil these new challenges of ecumenical fidelity.

The Rt. Rev'd Jabez Bryce

Chairman
Ecumenical Advisory Group

THE SHAPE OF THE REPORT

In Chapter I the Report tries to capture something of the richness and diversity of ecumenical life in the Anglican Communion today. It is based upon reflections offered by Ecumenical Officers from a number of different Provinces.

Chapter II reflects on the unity of the Church in the context of the unity of the Kingdom of God, suggesting that it is within the perspective of the Kingdom and the Church's vocation to be foretaste, instrument and sign of the Kingdom that outstanding issues of difference between the churches, such as the ministry of oversight, might be seen in a new and reconciling light.

Chapter III turns to consider the emergence of a coherent view of visible unity. It sees Anglican unity as a window into a wider unity and reviews what recent ecumenical dialogues have suggested about the vision of visible unity. It maps out different steps or stages on the way to unity.

Chapter IV reviews the work of the bilateral and multilateral international dialogues undertaken on the direction of the Resolutions of Lambeth 1988. This is followed by a short reflection on the need for the Anglican Communion to take seriously the process of reception of the ecumenical agreements in Chapter V.

Finally in Chapter VI, the Ecumenical Advisory Group makes some specific recommendations for the Bishops to consider at the 1998 Lambeth Conference. Appendix I enlarges on one of these recommendations which proposes the establishment of an Inter-Anglican Standing Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

CHAPTER I

THE RICHNESS OF LOCAL ECUMENICAL ACTIVITY

1. The *Emmaus Report* (1987) reminded bishops gathered for the 1988 Lambeth Conference that, "It is not possible for any individual or Province to grasp the fullness of [the] ecumenical vision or to see clearly the goal of Christian unity". (p.6) By way of introduction, or "setting the scene" for this *Agros Report* it is important for the Bishops of

the Anglican Communion gathered for the 1998 Lambeth Conference to have before them a picture of the rich diversity of ecumenical life that has developed in the Provinces of the Anglican Communion, especially those which have emerged or developed since Lambeth 1988. This is certainly not exhaustive and the Bishops at Lambeth 1998 will wish to make their own contributions to this picture of emerging unity.

2. The search for Christian unity encompasses the whole of Christian life; issues of faith and order together with those of life, work and witness. Throughout the world, the local scene provides the context and the foci that largely determine in what ways Christians are able to live and work together ecumenically. But the Ecumenical Advisory Group would reaffirm that whether co-operation aims towards the reconciliation and visible unity of the Church of God, or whether it seeks social justice or the well-being of God's creation, "All these tasks, and many others, may properly be seen to be part of the one ecumenical movement". (*Emmaus* p. 6)

3. Differing cultural and historical legacies across the Provinces of the Communion each contribute in various ways to the environment in which ecumenism may flourish or, indeed, provide particular problems and issues which need addressing by the churches. For example, in Africa, the concept of the extended family leads to a natural ecumenism. But, in Western Europe and to a certain extent in North America, the divisions of the Reformation era may lead to a deep-seated climate of suspicion and even prejudice.

4. Anglicanism, as its identity has developed through successive Lambeth Conferences, is well-placed to make a significant contribution to the ecumenical movement. It might be argued that Anglican ecclesiological and theological method is, in fact, inherently ecumenical.

Life and Death, Justice & Peace

5. In many parts of the Anglican Communion, particularly in parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia, issues of life and death drive people to cross denominational, inter-faith and ideological boundaries. For example, where there is little or no water, denominational allegiance becomes irrelevant.

6. Similar considerations apply in situations where there is violence, oppression and the systematic violation of human rights. In Malawi, for example, as in other places, the church is seen as a powerful advocate, the voice of the voiceless. In these sorts of situations Christians co-operate not only with those of other denominations but also with those outside of the Church.

7. As Christians struggle together over these vital matters of justice they can be led to discover their underlying unity in Christ and come to articulate their need for deeper

sharing and ecclesial communion. An example of this is in the Philippines where the Philippine Independent Church and the United Church of Christ have come into dialogue through their common involvement together in issues of social justice.

8. Issues of social justice, however, are rarely, if ever, purely geographically isolated. Anglicans live, as never before, in one world and there are often global causes for many of the local and regional problems and global consequences for many local or regional actions. The process of progressive globalisation in the fields of trade, capital and production as well as in politics, culture and communication have impelled Christians to confront, in a spirit of prophecy the welfare and rights of all people. Christians in the North, like those in the South also collaborate together in order to address these crucial issues.

9. Whether in the North or the South, many Christians are deepening their recognition of those in their communities who are particularly powerless and marginalised in order to ensure that they participate fully in discernment and decision-making both in their churches and in the wider community. Among these, we might particularly underline youth and women. With regard to the latter, the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women has highlighted their particular issues in a focused way.

10. The Churches, over the last decade have come to see that it is impossible to separate the struggle for justice and peace from the search for the visible unity of the Church of God.

Local and National & Regional Council of Churches

11. Local and National Councils of Churches have a particular role to play in facilitating cross-denominational co-operation in these areas of justice and peace.

12. A particular feature of the last ten years has been the re-structuring of local, national and regional councils of churches in order to make them both more responsive and more inclusive. In Australia, South Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, Britain, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Canada and other places, the Roman Catholic Church is now a full member of many of those ecumenical bodies. Comprehensive membership of these councils by all the churches in a region helps develop a climate of cooperation within which, churches are drawn more and more to live ecumenically according to the "Lund" principle of acting together wherever possible.

13. At their best, local, national and regional councils of churches balance within themselves the need for facilitating ecumenical co-operation on issues of particular concern in the social, political and economic arenas with questions of faith and order. They keep before their member churches the ecclesiological implications of their common,

ecumenical life and the universal goal of the visible unity of God's Church.

14. Anglicans see these interrelated elements as gifts to build up a life of communion to the glory of God and the mission of the Gospel in the world. They provide for discernment and guidance in matters of faith, order and moral conduct, and enable mutual support and accountability in those tasks. They strengthen the church's missionary vocation and its engagement in justice, peace and the care and renewal of creation.

15. In all her life as well as in responding to such issues as social justice, globalisation and in taking steps towards greater visible unity, the Church is sustained by the Holy Spirit. This strength and inspiration comes through prayer, reflection on Scripture and the Sacraments. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a world process which is received locally across the world. It provides one opportunity for the development of an ecumenical spirituality.

Other Types of Ecumenical Life

16. In parallel with the development of and participation in local, national and regional councils of Churches, Anglicans have explored other ways of living ecumenically. In many parts of the world, local ecumenical agreements, sometimes called covenants are in place. These often allow for a greater sharing of life, ministry and worship. If the ecumenical movement is to be experienced where people are, this is an essential process and these partnerships need to be nurtured by the churches.

17. New, intermediate levels of ecumenism have developed in many places often entailing some degree of shared oversight or *episcopate*, for example in county structures in England or in sector ministries such as university chaplaincies, prison chaplaincies and military chaplaincies.

18. In many parts of the world, candidates for the Church's ministry are formed and educated within ecumenical contexts and use ecumenical texts. This develops their ecumenical sensitivity and understanding as well as enriching their breadth of knowledge and apperceptions.

19. Even where such partnerships are not in place, the sharing of resources and gifts remains an important challenge. This is not merely a matter of practical expediency, but is grounded biblically and theologically in the concept of *koinonia* (communion). There is no doubt that this is fundamental to the church's life and the presence of ecumenical participants and observers at decision-making meetings (for example) is a significant way of expressing a commitment to this co-inherence.

Further Local, National and Regional steps towards Christian Unity

20. In some parts of the Anglican Communion, Provinces have entered into bi- and multi-lateral dialogues. Many of these explore the result of international dialogues and conversations from the point of view of local and regional situations often with a view to moving into a closer relationship in life.

21. Some of these local and regional multi- and bilateral conversations have lead to substantive agreement and unity schemes. Notable among these is the *Fetter Lane Common Statement* between the Church of England and the Moravian Church; the *Covenant for the Unity of the Church* in South Africa which will bring together Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodist and Anglicans; the Covenant between the Philippine Independent Church and the Episcopal Church of the Philippines; and the proposed covenant amongst the Churches in Wales which includes an initiative concerning an Ecumenical Bishop.

22. It is important that consistency and coherence across all these local and regional conversations and dialogues is maintained throughout the Anglican Communion. International bilateral and multilateral dialogues have an important part to play in ensuring that coherence. It is also important that Anglicans around the world claim a common portrait of the unity they believe God is calling them to live with other Christians in the light of their understanding of the unity of God's kingdom.

CHAPTER I I

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. THE CHURCH AS FORETASTE, INSTRUMENT AND SIGN OF THE KINGDOM

23. The vision and promise of the Kingdom of God, God's ultimate purpose to unite all things in Christ, compels us to seek the unity of the Church and all Christian people. The vision of the kingdom and its unity is portrayed in the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven disclosing a vision of the whole human family, where all nations walk in the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb, where the gates are never shut and where the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations. The kingdom is revealed most fully in the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus: in his miracles of healing and the raising of Lazarus; in his eating and drinking with forgiven sinners, with the women, the poor and the marginalised; in his obedience to the Father, his giving himself up to death, and in his rising to new life.

24. The realization of the unity of all things was God's intention in creation, and in the sending of his Son (Eph 1: 3-10). God's reconciling work continues wherever, by the power of the Holy Spirit, men and women act for good in the world to-day. Proceeding from the Father and sent by the Son, the Holy Spirit continues the work of Christ as the reconciler and comforter of humanity.

25. The kingdom and God's intention for the unity of all humanity and creation within it provides the framework in which the Church's vocation to unity is most creatively explored. The Church is **foretaste, instrument and sign** of the unity of God's Kingdom. (cf. *God's Reign and our Unity*)

26. By the grace of God the Church is already a **foretaste** of the kingdom in so far as it participates even now in the life of God the Holy Trinity. In baptism the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ in his death and resurrection, and with each other in Christ; in the eucharist we who are nourished by the body and blood of Christ are one because we share in the same gift of divine life. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ". The Holy Spirit binds us to God and to one another. It is the indwelling Spirit that mediates the presence of God with us. The Church is foretaste of the kingdom whenever the life in Christ issues in acts of faith and love in service to the community of the baptised and in care for humanity and creation. The Church is foretaste of the kingdom wherever the diversity given in creation flourishes and reflects in its life the diversity that belongs to the kingdom. As foretaste of the kingdom, the Church is a divine reality, and transcends present finite reality. At the same time it is a human institution, sharing the ambiguity and frailty of the human condition, always itself in need of repentance and renewal.

27. The Church as foretaste of the unity and communion of the kingdom is **instrumental** in God's ultimate purpose to unite all things in his kingdom. It exists to carry on the mission of Christ, for the glory of God and the reconciliation of humankind and all creation (Eph. 1:10). The mission of Christ in witnessing to the kingdom includes bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, light to those in darkness and freedom to the oppressed. Because the Church participates in the life of Christ crucified, it is a part of the nature and mission of the Church to share in the struggles and sufferings of humanity.

28. The Church is called to proclaim in its own life the good news of the kingdom. Only a community which overcomes division within its own life will be **sign** of the kingdom. Divisions between men and women, black and white, rich and poor, young and old contradict the unity and reconciliation of God's Kingdom. Divisions between Christian churches are also a sign against the unity God intends for the whole of creation. The Church is an effective sign of the kingdom in so far as it lives in obedience and faithfulness to the unity of the kingdom.

29. To say that the Church is **foretaste, instrument and sign** of the kingdom is not to say that God's call to the kingdom is confined to the Church. There are acts of justice, generosity and selfless love by those who do not call themselves Christians which are signs of the kingdom. In bearing witness to the unity of the kingdom, Christians are called to make common cause with all those whose actions embody the values of the kingdom whether or not they are done in the name of Christ.

30. However, not all claims to work for the unity and good of humanity create the unity of the kingdom. Some claims built on transnational economic systems advocate particular economic, geopolitical and globalisation theories which ensure that the power of wealth, knowledge and influence remain in the hands of a few and mask the oppression which keeps the poor enslaved. As a sign and instrument of the kingdom, the Church is called to distinguish on conformity with the Gospel between systems which work for a just, sustainable and participatory society and unjust systems which claim to work for global unity while keeping millions trapped and powerless with no say in their own destiny. The Church is called to a solidarity with the world in which it is possible to pursue the aims of the kingdom and maintain space to speak a word of critical judgment with discernment and courage. For example, opposition to the government under apartheid has left Christians in South Africa asking what place is there now for cooperation with a friendly government in attempting to bear witness to the kingdom in the new society. The Church has to decide when to affirm and when to oppose government, when to challenge the private sector and when to cooperate with it in order to work for the liberation of the oppressed and carry out its vocation as instrument and sign of the kingdom. The inner life of the Church as foretaste of the kingdom, its life of faith, prayer and sacrament, empowers the church to act as instrument and to be sign of the unity of the kingdom.

31. Christian disunity

diminishes the life of the Church as **foretaste** of the kingdom here and now;
weakens the effectiveness of the Church as **instrument** in serving and
playing its part in the bringing in the kingdom;
subverts the Church as **sign** proclaiming in its life the unity of the kingdom;

When we discern at a deeper level the Church's vocation as foretaste, instrument and sign of the kingdom, the issues which prevent Christian unity will most likely be overcome.

B. DIVISIVE ISSUES REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF THE KINGDOM

32. The call to pursue the ecumenical task in the light of the values of the kingdom sheds light on old ecumenical problems.

33. Differences in **doctrine, sacramental belief, spirituality and Christian life** which

arise from different historical and cultural contexts may be seen as legitimate formulations or expressions of Christian faith, providing they point to the communion of the kingdom and to the one Lord of the Church, who has already inaugurated the Father's Kingdom. The purpose of ecumenical dialogue is not to negotiate a uniformity in Christian expression, but to seek assurance that diversity is a genuine expression of the life of Christ and the kingdom. Ecumenical dialogue may call for correction or balance in any Christian tradition in the light of a common understanding of the Church as foretaste, instrument and sign of Christ's kingdom.

34. A recurring and central problem for ecumenical dialogue is the **non-recognition of ordained ministries** after the separation of churches. Even when major doctrinal obstacles are overcome, the problem of the recognition of ministries has often blocked the reconciliation of churches. A vision of the Church as serving the communion of the kingdom may enable Christians to recognise other forms of oversight of the Word and Sacrament, of prayer and life. As well as looking back to questions of past continuity, the churches should look forward to the ultimate goal of the unity of all things in Christ and see in this eschatological perspective other ministries as instrumental to this purpose. This perspective sheds new light on the Anglican stress on the vital importance of the historic episcopate, for the communion of the kingdom is not only of all peoples "at the end of time", but "through time". The historic episcopate is a sign of communion through the ages, as well as all instrument moving the Church towards this same goal of which it is also a foretaste.

35. Different **ecclesiologies** also divide Christians, and the Church understood as sacrament of the kingdom puts these divisions into a fresh perspective. Congregational, Pentecostal, evangelical and community churches usually see the basic embodiment of the Church as the congregation at the most local level. Other churches, including our own, recognise the diocese within a national, provincial, or particular church as the fundamental ecclesiological unit. The Roman Catholic Church also emphasizes the universal as a necessary dimension of ecclesiology. If the Church is to be a **foretaste** of the communion of the kingdom, the values of the kingdom must be actually lived out at the most local level. But for the Church to be an **instrument** of the kingdom it must also be organized in a way that can respond to the structures of human society at an intermediate and national level. And for the Church to be fully a **sign** of the communion of the kingdom it must visibly transcend all ethnic, national or multi-national divisions.

36. In the same way, **church polities** are seen in a new context. At the most local level of Christian community all the baptized must exercise their particular gifts or ministries - their priesthood - for the proclamation and work of the kingdom and the praise of God's name. But for the effective exercise of their ministry there is an ordering in the distribution of these gifts and ministries. The oversight of an ordained ministry is essential to the Church in pointing to the kingdom. Moreover, because the Kingdom is always intra-personal, a communion in the life of the Holy Trinity and a communion of all peoples in

their diversity, so also it is essential that oversight (*episcopo*) is exercised personally. In this light, the bishop in the diocese and the Primate in the Province speak for the communion of the kingdom in a personal way. And in the same light, we can also begin to consider the portrait of a personal episcopal ministry of unity for all Christians at the universal level.

37. The EAG believes that outstanding issues of difference are most likely to be overcome when they are considered in the perspective of the unity of the Kingdom and the Church's vocation to be **sign, instrument and foretaste** of the Kingdom that is a sacrament of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS A COHERENT VISION OF VISIBLE UNITY

A. ANGLICAN UNITY AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

38. The unity we seek with all Christians cannot be less than the unity Anglicans already enjoy within the Anglican Communion a unity for the sake of God's glory and the mission of the Gospel. Anglican unity is characterized by:

The confession of a common faith, grounded in Holy Scripture and set forth in the Catholic Creeds, which the Church is called to proclaim afresh in the language, symbols and imagery of every place and every generation;

A common worship in which changing forms of liturgy inform each other and witness to an essential unity;

The sacraments of baptism and eucharist and other ministries of grace;

A ministry of every member in which each has gifts to offer for the life of the communion and in service to others and the service of a threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon in the historic succession:

A theological method in which scripture, tradition and reason play interrelated and complementary parts;

Structures at local, provincial and world level which are personal, collegial and communal and which support the church in a life of interdependence and communion: a local church, gathered around the bishop, in communion with every local church; served by provincial structures with delegated authority to make binding decisions, and worldwide instruments (the

Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the ACC and the Primates Meetings) of consultation and unity.

39. Anglicans see these interrelated elements as gifts to build up a life of communion to the glory of God and the mission of the Gospel in the world. They strengthen the church's missionary vocation and its engagement in justice, peace and the care and renewal of creation. They provide for discernment and guidance in matters of faith, order and moral conduct, and enable mutual support and accountability in those tasks .

40. A characteristic feature of Anglican life is the way it holds together many diversities. Evangelicals, catholics, liberals and charismatics bring a diversity of insight and perspective to Anglican life in communion. Differences which arise from a variety of reactions to critical study and interpretation of the Bible, the particularity of cultural contexts, different schools of thought and scientific theory, are together brought to bear on contemporary challenges to faith, order and moral teaching.

41. In the life of the Anglican Communion, whenever major issues have appeared to threaten it, there has been discussion of the nature and permissible limits of diversity and the effectiveness of Anglican structures to hold the Communion together. At its best, Anglican unity is characterized by generosity and mutual tolerance in diversity. It demonstrates a willingness to contain difference and to live with tension, even conflict, as the church seeks a the mind of Christ on controversial issues that threaten its unity. Anglican comprehensiveness is not a sign of weakness or uncertainty of the central truths of the faith, nor does it mean that there are no tolerable limits to the differences which impair unity.

42. The communion which Anglicans share has been enriched by its fellowship with the Churches of Bangladesh, North India, Pakistan and South India. Also by the close relationship of the churches in communion: the Mar Thoma Church, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht and the Philippine Independent Church. In this decade a number of Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches will be present at the Lambeth Conference as members of this group. The coming into communion of churches from a wide variety of ecclesial traditions raises new and important questions about Anglican identity. What structures in the future will serve to nurture this growing unity?

43. The communion which Anglicans share offers a window into that richer unity we seek with Christians everywhere. Through our developing experience of other Christian traditions and the sharing of worship, life and mission in many places, we grow in understanding a unity which is "beyond Anglicanism" and which would be a more faithful sign of and effective instrument in the service of the unity of God's Kingdom.

44. The internal Anglican search for identity and unity and the search for unity with our

ecumenical partners belong together. Through forms of shared life with other Christians and in ecumenical dialogue, bilateral and multilateral, Anglicans have been helped to fill out the portrait of the visible unity of the Church.

B. THE EMERGING ECUMENICAL PORTRAIT OF VISIBLE UNITY

45. Anglican understanding of the visible unity we seek is being shaped, consciously and unconsciously, by the experience of ecumenical fellowship as well as by the insights and descriptions of visible unity in theological dialogues. The following extracts sum up some of the major developments in understanding the goal of visible unity in the period of ecumenical dialogue from 1961-1995.

(i) The Work of the World Council of Churches

46. In the **New Delhi** (1961) assembly statements, the WCC has been concerned to call the churches to the goal of visible unity. The assembly statements have gradually put content into the phrase "visible unity".

47. The 3rd Assembly in **New Delhi** said this about the form of visible unity:

"We believe that the unity which is both God's wish and his gift to his Church is made visible as all in each place who are baptised into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such ways that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people (*New Delhi Report*, page 116)."

48. The Fourth Assembly in **Uppsala** (1968) developed further certain aspects of the earlier description. It attempted to define more precisely the unity we seek through the use of the concept of catholicity showing how the churches in all places belong together and are called to act together. It said:

"The Ecumenical movement helps to enlarge this experience of universality, and its regional councils and its World Council may be regarded as a transitional opportunity for eventually actualizing a truly universal, ecumenical, conciliar form of common life and witness. The members of the World Council of Churches, committed to each other, should work for the time when a genuinely ecumenical council may once more speak for all

Christians and lead the way into the future (*Uppsala Report*, p.17)."

49. Uppsala's contribution to the goal of visible unity lay both in its emphasis upon "conciliar fellowship" and in its emphasis upon the Church as "sign". 'The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of humankind'. This may be an indication of the influence of Vatican II upon the WCC. *Lumen Gentium*'s famous sentence said, "The Church is a kind of sacrament and instrument, a sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind". Uppsala's account, however, was more eschatological with its phrase "the coming unity". The emphasis in Uppsala on "sign" implied that unity is a quality to be displayed by the Church in each given situation. That quality has its model, indeed, its source in the life of the Triune God and in the kenotic love of the incarnation.

50. In the years between Uppsala and the Fifth Assembly in **Nairobi** (1975) Uppsala's concept of 'conciliar fellowship' was developed in the work of the Faith and Order Commission so that the Nairobi Assembly was able to clarify the concept further

"The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship, each local church possesses, in communion with the others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith, and therefore recognises the others as belonging to the same Church of Christ and guided by the same Spirit. As the Delhi Assembly pointed out, they are bound together because they have received the same baptism and share in the same eucharist; they recognise each other's members and ministries. They are one in their common commitment to confess the Gospel of Christ by proclamation and service to the world. To this end, each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationships with her sister churches, expressed in conciliar gatherings whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling (*Nairobi Report*, page 60)."

51. Nairobi was not setting up an alternative to the model of New Delhi, but drawing out one of its implications. Christians will know that they are truly united in the same Church and are guided by the same Spirit when they realise at least four basic marks of 'conciliar fellowship': common commitment to the apostolic faith; one baptism and eucharist; recognition of each other's members and ministries; and conciliar gatherings for common deliberations and decision.

52. For some, the Nairobi statement was a breakthrough with its clear enunciation of the essential characteristics of the visible unity of the Church, but for others, it was confusing. It used the same term "conciliar" to describe both one of the three structural requirements of realising the visibility of the one Church (conciliar gatherings), and also the very nature

of the Church itself, "A conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly unite". The situation was further confused because the English word "council" and its derivatives are capable of two different interpretations (by contrast, Latin and French use two words; *concilium/concile* refer to the conciliar fellowship we seek, while *consilium/conseil* refer to present "conciliar gatherings", such as the WCC). Because of this confusion in English, the vision of "conciliar fellowship" was difficult to communicate. It was understood by some as **less** than organic union and an acceptance of the state of conciliar fellowship that already exists in councils of churches and the World Council itself. In spite of the fact that the Nairobi statement itself makes quite clear that "conciliar fellowship" does not describe the present reality, and the repeated attempts by Faith and Order theologians to establish that "conciliar fellowship" is not an alternative to, but rather an explication of, "organic union", the concept never gained the widespread reception that it deserved.

53. The Report of section 2 of the Vancouver Assembly (1982) underlined the three marks of a united Church:

"First, the churches would share a common understanding of the apostolic faith, and be able to confess this message together in ways understandable, reconciling and liberating to their contemporaries. Living this apostolic faith together, the churches help the world to realise God's design for creation.

Second, confessing the apostolic faith together, the churches would share a full mutual recognition of baptism, the eucharist and ministry, and be able through their visible communion to let the healing and uniting power of these gifts become more evident amidst the divisions of mankind.

Third, the churches would agree on common ways of decision-making and ways of teaching authoritatively, and be able to demonstrate qualities of communion, participation and corporate responsibility which could shed healing light in a world of conflict." (*Vancouver Report*, page 45)

54. Over and above this the Report emphasises the relation of the unity of the Church and the renewal of human community, picking up the Uppsala stress on the Church as "sign". The Church is called to be a "prophetic sign" a prophetic community through which and by which the transformation of the world can take place.

55. The only statement formally adopted by the **Canberra** Assembly (1991) was a new statement on unity, *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: gift and calling*. The elements of visible expression of the unity of the Church are described as:

the common confession of the apostolic faith;

a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship;

a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognised and reconciled;

a common mission witnessing to all people to the Gospel of God's grace and serving the whole creation.

The goal of the search for full communion is realised when all the churches are able to recognise in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fullness. This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action (*Canberra Report*, pages 172-174).

56. There is an ambiguity here. Is the reference to "all the churches" a reference to local churches or to churches in the sense of all the denominations? The answer to this has a significant bearing on the interpretation of "full communion" as used in this text.

57. There are two further important emphases. First, the notion of *koinonia* is fundamental to this statement. The *koinonia* of God's own life is the underlying reality of the Church in which all the baptised share. A "certain degree of *koinonia*" exists between the churches. The churches are called to take steps towards manifesting "full communion". A second emphasis, which came from the struggles in the Assembly, is the importance of diversity as essential and integral to communion (*koinonia*), together with an explicit reference to the "limits to diversity".

58. The Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in **Santiago de Compostela** (1993) expressed in its own conference theme a statement about unity: *Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness*. The Conference was itself a comment upon the Canberra Statement in the light of Faith and Order's work over a thirty year period. The working document emphasized the theme of *koinonia* developing the short paragraphs in the Canberra Statement. The visible characteristics of *koinonia* laid before the Conference were those of a communion in faith, a faith grounded in Scripture and focused in the Nicene Creed; a communion in life focused in the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, nurtured by an ordained ministry within the ministry of the whole people of God; and a communion in witness entailing the renewal of the Church as prophetic sign of the Kingdom.

59. The Conference did not simply affirm this picture, but added to it by asking for further identification of what structures of mutual accountability, authority and decision making would be necessary to hold together the *koinonia*. There was reference here to the synodical and primatial structures to serve unity. And the Conference emphasised the characteristics

of ethical living, what has sometimes been called "moral community", as an element of the portrait. The Conference was influenced by Archbishop Desmond Tutu's reflection: "apartheid was too strong for divided churches"; churches need the strength of common witness against oppression. This latter theme was only indirectly expressed in the second part of the *Canberra Statement*, where churches were invited to recommit themselves to work for "justice, peace and the integrity of creation, linking more closely the search for sacramental communion of the Church with the struggles for justice and peace". The Conference's message to the churches was: "there is no turning back, either from the goal of visible unity or from the ecumenical movement that unites concerns for the unity of the Church and concern for engagement in the struggles of the world".

(ii) The Anglican-Reformed Dialogue

60. This dialogue has had a considerable impact on the ecumenical movement and is especially important for Anglicans as they consider the portrait of visible unity. In its statement of the goal, the Anglican-Reformed dialogue embraces the statements of the World Council from New Delhi to Vancouver an important challenge to us when it says: "We believe our two communions should endorse these ecumenical findings. This would imply that we are not simply seeking a *modus vivendi* between two globally organised denominations which would continue their separate though reconciled existence".

61. *God's Reign and our Unity* has succeeded in providing a comprehensive ecclesiological vision which fired the imaginations of those who read it. It sets the unity of the Church within an understanding of the life of the Triune God, the eschatological purpose of God, and the contemporary fact of the broken, suffering and conflicted world. In a broken and divided world the Church is called to be a "sign, instrument, foretaste and first fruits" of the eschatological Kingdom of God. The quest for Church unity must never be separated from, or set over against, the great issues of God's rule of justice and peace. The Church contradicts its own nature and calling when its members are unable to live together in close fellowship. Concern for the unity of all humankind is the proper context for the quest for church unity. The question for the unity of all humankind cannot be divorced from the quest for church unity.

62. Important also in this dialogue is the manifestation of unity at the local level. The goal is the emergence of reconciled local communities each of which is recognisable as "church" in the proper sense: i.e., "communities which exhibit in each place the fullness of ministerial order, eucharistic fellowship, pastoral care and missionary commitment; and which, through mutual communion and co-operation, bear witness on the regional, national and even international levels". The aim is for "locally recognisable forms of the Universal Church something which expresses locally the wholeness of the Catholic Church".

(iii) The Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue

(a) Pullach, ALERC, Cold Ash

63. The report of the International Anglican-Lutheran dialogue in 1973 (Pullach) described the aim of Anglican Lutheran conversations as the establishment of "full communion between our two churches". After Lambeth 1978 the relationship between Anglicans and Lutherans were developed in regional dialogues in the USA, Europe and Africa.

64. At the end of its report the Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission (ALERC, 1982) claimed:

"...there are no longer any serious obstacles on the way towards the establishment of full communion between our two Churches. What differences of theological emphasis remain we regard as not serious enough to divide our Churches, though we recognise that our agreement needs to be tested and received by the Churches before it can be implemented and a changed relationship result (*The Report of the European Commission*, paragraph 62) . "

What was meant by "full communion" as it is used in this report? Is it synonymous with "organic church union" referred to in paragraph 43? The fact that the Report does not deal with authority, a structure of authority in the Church raises the question of whether "full communion" was intended to entail a structural expression of church unity at the regional and even the world level.

65. The Joint Working Group set up to provide an overview of Anglican-Lutheran regional developments described "full communion" as:

a relationship between two distinct churches or communions. Each maintains its own autonomy and recognises the catholicity and apostolicity of the other, and each believes the other to hold the essentials of Christian faith (*Cold Ash*, 1983).

Full communion is taken to imply that members may receive the sacraments of the other; bishops of one Church may take part in the consecrations of bishops of the other; if invited to do so, a bishop, pastor/priest, or deacon may exercise liturgical functions in a congregation, with regular consultation and communication. "To be in full communion means that churches become interdependent while remaining autonomous".

66. Following the 1988 Lambeth Conference developments in Anglican-Lutheran relations have continued in the regions. These agreements evoke the question of how far the goal of these regional conversations is the same particularly when the terminology in them to describe the goal of unity differs.

(b) Full Communion and the Concordat of Agreement

67. For the purpose of the Concordat both churches, the ELCA and ECUSA, endorsed in principle, the definition of full communion agreed to in the *Cold Ash Report*, 1983. (Preface, *Concordat of Agreement*).

68. Full Communion entails the full interchangeability of all **episcopal** ministries. While the two churches acknowledge the authenticity of each other's ordained ministries from the beginning of the process, the creation of a common and therefore fully interchangeable **episcopal** ministry will only occur with the full incorporation of all active bishops in the historic episcopate by common joint ordinations/installations and the continuing process of collegial conversation in matters of faith and life.

69. Full Communion also includes the activities of the Joint Co-ordinating Committee as well as the "establishment, **locally and nationally**, of recognised organs of regular consultation and communication, including episcopal collegiality, to express and strengthen the fellowship and enable common witness. life and service".

70. Full communion means, as well, "that the churches are permanently committed to common mission and ministry on the basis of agreement of faith, recognising each other fully as churches in which the Gospel is preached and the holy sacraments administered."

71. Full Communion includes the "mutual pledge to a future already anticipated in Christ and the Church of the early centuries". (*Concordat: E. Full Communion, pare 14-16*)

(c) The Porvoo Common Statement (1991)

72. The conversations between the Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches aimed at achieving 'visible unity'. The Report begins with a portrait of visible unity. The unity of the Church is grounded in the mysterious relation of the Holy Trinity. Diversity is essential to the life of visible unity. Visible unity "entails agreement in faith together with the common celebration of the sacrament, supported by a united ministry in the historic episcopal succession and conciliar consultation in matters of faith, life and witness". The Report uses the Term "visible unity" rather than "full communion" to describe its aim because of the confusion in understanding the content of this term (cf Appendix I).

(d) Visible Unity in the Canadian Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue

73. In 1995 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, and the National Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada called for the establishment of

a Joint Working Group to continue the work towards a declaration of full communion by the year 2001.

74. The Joint Working Group is addressing outstanding issues between the two churches such as the meaning of "full authenticity of ministries", the distinctions of the threefold ministry and the enabling of mutual participation of the bishops of each church in the installation/consecration of bishops. In this work, the group has benefited from the fruits of earlier rounds of Canadian Anglican-Lutheran dialogue (CLAD 1 and CLAD II), from international and regional Anglican-Lutheran dialogues, such as the *Niagara Report (1987)* and the *Porvoo Common Statement (1991)* as well as from the work on apostolicity, succession of the apostolic ministry and the mutual recognition of ministries contained in *BEM*.

75. "Full Communion" as proposed in the Canadian dialogue owes much to the *Cold Ash Report*:

"a relationship between two distinct churches or communions in which each maintains its own autonomy while recognising the catholicity and apostolicity of the other, and believing the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith. In such a relationship communicant members of each church would be able freely to communicate at the altar of the other and there would be freedom of ordained ministers to officiate sacramentally in either church."

76. Other elements of the portrait of full communion highlighted by the dialogue as specific to the Canadian context include:

"transferability of members; mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries; freedom to use each other's liturgies; freedom to participate in each other's ordinations and installations of clergy, including bishops; and structures for consultation to express, strengthen and enable our common life, witness and service to the glory of God and the salvation of the world."
(*Canadian Lutheran-Anglican Dialogue II, 1992*)

77. The proposals emphasise that there will not be "merger" of the two churches, for while there will be structures for mutual consultation, each church will retain its autonomy. The relationship is described as one of "sister churches" and comparison is made to the existing relationships between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Philippine Independent Church, the Mar Thoma Church and Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht.

78. The relationship of 'full communion' is seen to be a step, between two churches, on the way to 'full visible unity' which is described as the final vision and goal of the ecumenical

movement.

(e) A Challenge

79. These different regional conversations with Lutherans seem to suggest that Anglicans and Lutherans at the international level might do well to set out what at this particular stage in the way towards the unity of our two Communion is the common goal of unity that motivates the several regional moves and how best this is to be named. This need to be done for the sake of consistency and coherence.

(iv) The Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue

80. The goal was expressed in the 1977 text on the Mystery of the Church as "The union of all Christians in the one Church". That was, however, in the context of the statement that "Anglicans ... see our divisions as within the Church ... Orthodox, believe that the Orthodox Church is the One Church of Christ which as his body, is not and cannot be divided". It is, however, perhaps the *Dublin Agreed Statement* that presents the clearest and most convincing picture of a united Church. As in the Anglican-Reformed Dialogue, the *Dublin Agreed Statement* begins with the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of human community. The Church is sent out into the world as "sign, instrument and first-fruits" of the Kingdom of God (cf. *God's Reign and Our Unity*). It sees the unity of the Church grounded in the life of the Trinity into which Christians are drawn through baptism. They are united to one another, and human divisions of race, social status and sex are transcended. In explicating the credal marks of the Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, the *Dublin Agreed Statement* has important things to say about the goal: "The catholicity of the Church is shown in the multiplicity of particular local churches, each of which, being in eucharistic communion with all local churches, manifests in its own place and time the one catholic Church". These local churches will respond faithfully to their own very particular missionary situations and therefore develop in diverse fashions.

81. The unity of the Church is seen here to encourage and sustain diversity, not stifle it. Diversity is not seen in terms of surviving ecclesial identities but as the result of response to particular missionary situations. The apostolicity of the Church is recognised in the fidelity to the teaching and mission of the apostles and is manifest in the succession of bishops. The picture of the goal suggests that eventual full communion will be expressed in structures and ministries which go further than mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries: the one ministry will be symbolised in a ministry of universal primacy or seniority. Although this dialogue has not arrived at the detailed convergence and consensus of *The Final Report* of ARCIC I, its vision of the goal is important in bringing together our articulation of the unity we seek in terms of the mystery of the Church with pointers to the model of unity.

(v) The Anglican-Old Catholic Conversation

82. Anglican-Old Catholic relations are particularly interesting in relation to an investigation of the goal of unity. The *Bonn Agreement of 1931*, described at the time as one of "intercommunion" involved the following:

Each Communion recognises the catholicity and independence of the other and maintains its own;

Each Communion agrees to admit members of the other Communion to participate in the sacraments;

Intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.

Based upon mutual recognition of catholicity, a commitment to participate in the sacraments and agreement on essentials in faith (without agreement on all details) the *Bonn Agreement* was ahead of its time. Immediate steps followed:

mutual participation in episcopal consecrations;

exchange of visits;

sharing sacramental fellowship.

83. Although the Bonn Agreement has contributed to the ecumenical movement, the goal of unity as "intercommunion" or "full intercommunion", as it was sometimes described, seems to some less and less adequate. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, wrote:

"The *Bonn Agreement* can teach us the dangers of seeking only a comfortable half-way house on the ecumenical pilgrimage. Unity by stages is one thing - acquiescence, even contentment - with less than the full mutual participation unity implies is another ... We have the paradoxical achievement of sacramental communion without that which it is intended to signify ecclesial communion."

84. It was the realisation of the lack of effect on the life of the two Communions, apart from some exchanges and the occasional and significant participation in consecrations, that led to the setting up of a new International Conference between the two churches in 1993.

The first Statement (*The Maryvale Statement*) reported

"We are conscious that at present we have no structures which enable our bishops to make decisions together. Our bishops cannot act collegially because Anglicans are not members of the International Bishops' Conference, which can make binding decisions, ... we also have no common synods in which clergy and people, with their bishops, can make decisions together communally.

This underlines the fact that we are still two Communion, not one, and it also prevents us from bearing witness together in the guardianship, maintenance and proclamation of the faith."

(vi) The Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue

(a) *The Final Report of ARCIC I*

85. From the outset the intention of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue was to work towards "full visible unity" or "Full, organic unity of our two Communion", "the restoration of complete communion of faith and sacramental life" (*Common Declaration, 1968*). With the publication of *The Final Report* came the important introduction on the Church in which the concept of *koinonia* plays such a crucial role. It is this concept which binds the three statements together. Eucharist is understood as the effectual sign of *koinonia*, episcopate its servant and primacy its focal point. *Koinonia* is both the goal and the way. The riches and depths of *koinonia* will only be unfolded as the journey progresses with greater openness and commitment to one another. One of the most welcome things to emerge from *The Final Report*, taken as a whole, is a picture, however incomplete, of what unity and diversity might mean in a united Church. There is the emphasis on the need for unity to be focused in structures and persons transcending the local, and on the need for proper diversity never to be stifled. A Church that has a universal primate never divorced from collegiality, a servant figure focusing unity, should, the text suggests, be able to tolerate and sustain more, not less, diversity. The Second Authority Statement quotes Pope Paul VI's assurance that "there will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church". To some Anglicans this is undoubtedly a comfort against the fear of being 'swallowed up' by a larger body. Others however may see it as hinting at an Anglican rite or jurisdiction within a reunited Church which would basically retain its own liturgy and canon law. This would be different perspective from one which upholds a vision of local or regional churches shaped by the variety of their local history, cultural context and missionary task.

(b) ARCIC II

86. The intention of ARCIC II in its report *Church as Communion* was "to reflect more explicitly upon the nature of communion and its constituent elements". The text contains a clear and developed portrait of visible unity. It begins from a recognition of a "real though imperfect communion" that already exists, the recognition of a degree of communion and the intention to grow to a more profound communion.

87. As in the *Canberra Statement* and the *Dublin Agreed Statement* the underlying reality of the Church is held to be divine, trinitarian communion. The Church as communion is said to be "sacrament of the merciful grace of God for all humankind". The Church is "effective sign" and "instrument of salvation". The text explains the way in which the Church can be talked of as "sacrament" because in the Church God realizes his plan of salvation for the world.

88. For local churches to be together in visible communion certain essential, constitutive elements of ecclesial communion must be present and mutually recognised in each of them. This, however, does not necessitate precisely the same canonical ordering: "diversity of canonical structures is part of the acceptable diversity which enriches the one communion of all the churches".

89. The text describes visible unity in paragraph 45. It entails

confession of one apostolic faith;

one baptism;

one celebration of the eucharist;

shared commitment to mission;

shared concern for one another;

acceptance of the same basic moral values;

a ministry of oversight with collegial and primatial dimensions, open to the community's participation in the context of the communion of all the churches:

the episcopal ministry of a universal primate as the visible focus of unity.

All of these inter-related elements belong to the visible unity of the universal Church: they are not a guarantee of fidelity but the Church cannot dispense with them.

(vii) Developments in the Articulation of Visible Unity

90. These bilateral and multilateral ecumenical texts are taken from the period, spanning 1961-1995, with the exception of the *Bonn Agreement*, 1931. It is interesting to note the development of certain features:

(i) The unity of the Church in most dialogues is closely connected with the missionary imperative and with authentic witness. Moreover, the unity of the Church is seen in the perspective of God's Kingdom and the Church's vocation to be sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom.

(ii) Most of the dialogues emphasise the visible unity of the Church as revealing the underlying reality of *koinonia* in the mystery of the life of the Holy Trinity.

(iii) There is a change from talking about the unity we seek to unity as God's gift and our calling.

(iv) The terms of the earlier conversation to describe the unity which is God's gift such as "intercommunion", "organic union", "united not absorbed", "conciliar fellowship" and the "union of all Christians in the one Church" are giving way to the more frequent use of the terms "full communion"/"fuller communion" - "visible unity"/"full visible unity". Further clarification is needed on the content given to these terms in the different dialogues. Is their intention, in spite of the use of different terminology, to point to the same reality?

(v) Many of the dialogues seem to be converging on affirming that the distinguishing marks of unity include: a common faith, sacraments, ministry and personal, collegial and communal forms of ministry.

(vi) In many dialogues visible unity entails conciliarity. However, the relation of the ordained ministry of oversight to the role of the whole people of God in discernment, decision-making and reception is not always clear.

(vii) In a number of dialogues a primatial ministry is one of the elements serving the unity of the Church, exercised with and among the collegial and communal life of the Church.

(viii) An emphasis on the same basic ethical values and practice is in a number of dialogues seem to be a characteristic element of visible unity.

C. TOWARDS VISIBLE UNITY

91. Receiving God's gift of unity follows an unpredictable course: more like a river joined by many streams meandering to the sea than a straight road with regular and well defined milestones. Nevertheless, it is possible and useful to describe the different stages of the river's journey.

92. One way of describing the stages towards visible unity for Christian Churches which find themselves alongside each other in the same territory, has been to speak of progress from a state of competition through co-existence, to commitment, convergence and communion. These different stages imply certain attitudes of mind and heart necessary for the ecumenical task. Charity and continuous conversion, *metanoia*, are the constant requirements on the ecumenical journey.

93. A particular stage on the journey is marked by the common recognition of baptism. This carries with it a recognition of a degree of communion that already exists as well as a recognition of a shared christological and trinitarian faith grounded in the Scriptures and expressed in the Nicene Creed, the symbol of the faith of the Church through the ages. Those who recognise a common baptism are challenged to live out the implications of that recognition in shared worship, ethical commitment and in the search for an ever greater unity.

94. Increasing ecumenical co-operation flows from the common recognition of baptism: a commitment to joint ethical witness. Such co-operation is enabled by local, regional national and international Councils of Churches, which commonly include a wide spectrum of churches: Anglican Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal Churches as well as churches of the Reformation.

95. Churches are also committed to engage in theological dialogues, bilateral and multilateral, to explore outstanding issues of difference. Churches in dialogue discover and grow in commitment to each other. Sometimes theological conversations lead to the establishment of a covenant or concordat marking a new stage in relationship and binding the churches to do as many things together as conscience permits following the "Lund" principle, and encouraging them to continue the dialogue.

96. In some countries formal local ecumenical partnerships, shared ministries and co-operating parishes mark a particular stage of commitment. These may involve a degree of shared ministry and forms of shared oversight which are ecumenically accountable to the partner churches. Partnerships can take the form of ecumenical parishes, or joint sector ministries such as hospital, college, prison chaplaincies and military chaplaincies.

97. A decisive stage is reached when there is an agreement of mutual **eucharistic**

hospitality, sometimes called interim eucharistic sharing. Eucharistic sharing is interim because the fullness of unity is not yet achieved. It moves beyond any strictly pastoral provision for unilateral eucharistic hospitality in emergencies or in the absence of a priest or minister. It usually follows a doctrinal agreement but does not necessarily involve the full interchangeability of ministries. It does, however, imply the acknowledgement of the other church, as belonging to the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the apostolic ministry of the whole people of God. Further, it implies the acknowledgement of the other church's ministry as an authentic ministry of Word and Sacrament, even if issues of order and the historic succession are not completely resolved. Such agreements usually include a commitment not only to continue dialogue on the remaining issues of disagreement but also to seek to exercise joint forms of oversight. This is important not only for churches alongside each other in the same territory, but also for churches in different countries, for the goal of visible unity, if it is to be visible, implies a common form of oversight as well as a reconciled ministry.

98. A further stage in the pilgrimage to visible unity is sometimes described as "full communion" as in the proposals for a **Concordat of Agreement** between ECUSA and ELCA (see para. 1). "Full communion" in this relationship entails a shared life of faith, sacraments and witness and an interchangeable ministry. It envisage a growth into an ever fuller communion. *The Porvoo Common Statement* between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic Baltic Lutheran Churches describes the stage of unity reached as "visible unity". This too includes a shared life of faith, sacraments, witness, an interchangeable ministry and common forms of oversight as well as a commitment to full visible unity with all Christian people.

99. The EAG, in reviewing the goal of unity as expressed in the different theological dialogues and the terminology used, notes the need for consistency in the terminology used as well as in the expression of a shared portrait of visible unity. The history of the changing content given to the term "full communion" was reviewed in the *Emmaus Report* reproduced as Appendix II to this Report.

100. Attempts to describe stages in the ecumenical journey can hardly do justice to the diversity and multiplicity of ways in which the Holy Spirit leads the Church. What we have described as stages are no more than pointers to some of the experiences and commitments, not necessarily followed in an ordered way. Reflection on the relationship of the communion of the Church to the communion of the Kingdom suggests that full and perfect communion must always be the final eschatological reality. For these reasons some Anglicans prefer terms such as **full visible unity** or full ecclesial communion to describe a relationship based on agreement in faith, and involving reconciled Churches and ministries with common structures of oversight. But whatever terms are used, the fullest unity of the churches demands the possibility of communion in a wide and enriching diversity such as, (for example) the diversity of classical Eastern and Western forms of Christianity as well as the emerging Christian cultures of Africa, Asia, the Pacific and South America. But this

communion in diversity, reflecting the communion in diversity of the Holy Trinity, would find its unity in agreement in apostolic faith and order, including agreement in the apostolicity of the Church, the pre-eminent sign of which is the historic episcopate. To hold together and nurture this one communion there would need to be such bonds of unity and structures of oversight and common decision making adequate for their task. Such ecumenical oversight would be found at all levels of the Churches life; local, intermediate, national and global. And they would be manifested in communal, collegial and personal forms.

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