

Receiving One Another's Ordained Ministries

The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order

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Introduction

Called to make visible the unity of Christ's Church, the Churches of the Anglican Communion continue to grow into joyfully demanding relationships with our various ecumenical partners. Experiences of dialogue and praying together have greatly enriched our sense of who we are as Anglicans. In matters of mission, liturgy, theology, spirituality, ethics (and much more besides) the horizon of our Churches has been widened by graced encounters with our Christian sisters and brothers.

Anglicans recognise the extent of our participation in a shared life with Christians in other ecclesial traditions, using the biblical language of fellowship or communion (Greek *koinonia*). The rich theological language of communion underscores how this relationship is understood as a gift of the Triune God. We can neither establish communion with one another, nor break it, but simply recognise and receive it.

The communion in which we participate has different degrees. While relationships between Churches may be, for example, of *full* or of *impaired* communion, we recognise such communion as a divine gift at the heart of both our intra-Anglican and ecumenical relationships. As these relationships grow stronger, Anglicans inevitably face the question as to whether the degree of communion we share with our ecumenical partners has sufficient theological strength and depth to be articulated as a common calling to fuller communion with the traditions concerned. More specifically, is the communion that we share at a sufficient degree or stage that we might receive one another's ordained ministries?

Anglican Ecclesiology in Context

The answer that Anglicans give to this kind of question – and the way in which we respond to the situation out of which it emerges – is rooted in how we understand what it means to be a Church. Ecclesiology is the branch of theology that looks both to Christian tradition and to experience to set out the shape of the Christian Church. Anglicans have been shaped by centuries of ecclesiological debate, conflict and reflection; and this is reflected in the ways we have shaped our common life. We bring this Anglican tradition of understanding the Church with us as we enter into dialogue with an ecumenical partner. In the past, and as a result of dialogue and prayer, we have found it necessary to review how we express our self-understandings as Anglican Churches. Undoubtedly, since our tradition is a living reality, we will continue to face the task of reinterpreting ourselves afresh. Contexts change, and so do the ways in which tradition interacts with experience.

Many of our dialogues have resulted in new and flourishing relationships between formerly estranged Christian traditions. How do we speak about this relationship, while honouring the integrity of the partners in dialogue and their respective ecclesiologies? In ecumenical theology, these kinds of questions are posed using the language of *recognition*. To what extent do Anglicans *recognise* other Churches as Churches? And what are the consequences of *recognition* for the life of the church? Can partners in dialogue move into a relationship of *communion* or *full communion*? If they can, what is the place of *mutual recognition* of the authenticity of ordained ministries, on the one hand; and of *reconciliation* or *interchangeability* of ministries, on the other?

Ecclesiology: Anglican and Ecumenical

It is important to acknowledge that, in the past, the terms *communion* and *full communion* have been used in a variety of ways by Anglicans. Great care needs to be taken with the language of communion, as imprecision on here is deeply unhelpful to the developing and flourishing of our ecumenical relationships.

Historically, Anglican ecclesiology has said interchangeability of ministries requires reconciliation of episcopal ministries. Taking this step is possible only with partner Churches which are already ordered in the historic episcopate, or which take steps to receive the sign of the historic episcopate. Interchangeability of presbyters/priests can only come about when there is also interchangeability of episcopal ministers.

When Churches are not yet in a position to achieve interchangeability of episcopal ministries, there are still possibilities for shared ministry within specific ecumenical arrangements. These are described below. These possibilities enable churches to express their growth in the relationship of communion, and can provide a useful step towards full reconciliation in the increasingly shared lives of the Churches concerned.

Anglicans in various parts of the world have taken steps to achieve full interchangeability of ministers and ministries with different ecumenical partners. In some cases these have led to full, visible (or organic) unity, expressed though unity of structures. Such full visible (or organic) unity always remains the aim, particularly in Churches that bear witness, in the same territory, to the transformative love of Christ.

Since its endorsement by the Lambeth Conference of 1888, the Lambeth (or Chicago-Lambeth) Quadrilateral, with its four articles, has formed the foundation for relationships between Anglican and other churches.

- a. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- b. The Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- c. The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.

d. The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.¹

At the 1920 Lambeth Conference the bishops' "Appeal to All Christian People" reiterated the fourth article of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, in a slightly different form. They affirmed that "the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the wholehearted acceptance of... a ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body." They identified "the episcopate" as "the one means of providing such a ministry".² This principle continues to underlie Anglican discussions of the interchangeability of ministry.

Because Anglican teaching sees the authority of the priest/presbyter as rooted in that of the ordaining bishop/episcopal minister, interchangeability of presbyteral ministers is not possible without an agreement on the interchangeability of episcopal ministers. This should include explicit commitment to the ordination/consecration of future episcopal ministers within the historic episcopate. It should also include explicit recognition that, though they may retire or otherwise no longer hold a position of oversight, they remain episcopal ministers. Similarly, there should be clear agreement that future presbyteral ordinations will be conducted only by episcopal ministers. Mutual interchangeability of both ministries and ministers is therefore only possible for Anglicans with another Church if that other Church has, or is taking steps to receive, the sign of the historic episcopate. Anglicanism's historical commitment to the connection between the unity of the church and the historic episcopate finds an echo in wider ecumenical reflection on unity, faith and order.

For example: the *Porvoo Common Statement* (1996) achieved interchangeability of ministry between British and Irish Anglicans and most of the Scandinavian and Nordic Lutheran Churches. It observes (§51): 'The use of the sign of the historic episcopal succession does not by itself guarantee the fidelity of a church to every aspect of the apostolic faith, life and mission. ... Nonetheless, the retention of the sign remains a permanent challenge to fidelity and to unity, a summons to witness to, and a commission to realise more fully, the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles.'³

¹ The (Chicago-) Lambeth Quadrilateral, Resolution 11 of the 1888 Lambeth Conference, can be found here: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1888/1888-11.cfm. It was reaffirmed at the 1998 Lambeth Conference (Resolution IV.2: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-4-2.cfm). The affirmation that Anglicans 'have inherited and hold firmly to the pattern of the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, which guarantees our historical continuity and unites us with the many churches who hold to this order' also emerged from the 2008 Lambeth Conference (§G.102: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/2008).

² The Appeal to All Christian People, Resolution 9 of the 1920 Lambeth Conference, can be found here: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-9.cfm.

³ The *Porvoo Common Statement* can be found here: www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102178/porvoo_common_statement.pdf

Through *Called to Common Mission* (2001), the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America committed themselves 'to share an episcopal succession that is both evangelical and historic' (§12).⁴ In the *Waterloo Declaration* (2001), the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada confirmed (§B.3): 'we affirm each other's expression of episcopal ministry as a sign of continuity and unity in apostolic faith.'⁵ The *Waterloo Declaration* also explicitly stated the principle that the giving of this office is permanent: the bishops of both churches are ordained for life service of the Gospel in the pastoral ministry of the historic episcopate, although tenure in office may be terminated by retirement, resignation or conclusion of term, subject to the constitutional provisions of the respective churches' (§B.3). Through the *Bill to provide for interchangeability of ministry between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland* (2014), the Church of Ireland recognised the Methodist President as an Episcopal Minister exercising personal episcopate with an office and function consonant to that of a bishop in the Church of Ireland. It required two Church of Ireland bishops to participate 'in all future Installations and Consecrations of the President' and welcomed Presidents to participate in the consecration of Church of Ireland bishops (§2).⁶

It is important to bear in mind that, historically, the Anglican emphasis on the historic episcopate as the foundation for the reconciliation of ministries does not deny the spiritual reality of the ministries of churches which do not currently stand within the historic succession. As the 1920 *Appeal* emphasised: 'It is not that we call in question for a moment the spiritual reality of the ministries of those Communion which do not possess the episcopate. On the contrary we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace.' Despite the divisions and conflicts that have blighted the mission of Christ's church, the blessings and spiritual gifts offered by these ministries have been gratefully acknowledged by Anglicans many times.

Anglican recognition of the spiritual reality of these ministries, although it may (and often does) entail pulpit exchange and mutual Eucharistic hospitality, does not imply the possibility of interchangeability of ministries. This is possible, as noted above, only in the context of a relationship that has achieved the reconciliation of ministries, which, for Anglicans necessarily includes reconciliation of episcopal ministries. The question of the interchangeability of deacons can, however, be deferred for future work, or where there are differing understandings of diaconal ministry, be explicitly excluded.

Anglicans, generally understand (full) communion as a relationship between two distinct Churches or Communion, in which each maintains its own autonomy while recognising the catholicity and apostolicity of the other. They believe the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith, which makes it possible, for communicant

⁴ *Called to Common Mission* can be found here: www.episcopalchurch.org/page/agreement-full-communication-called-common-mission.

⁵ The *Waterloo Declaration* can be found here: www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102184/waterloo_declaration.pdf.

⁶ The *Bill* can be found here: <http://ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Synod/2014/Bills/Bill1.pdf>.

members of each church to receive Holy Communion, and for ordained ministers to officiate sacramentally in either church. Full communion brings about transferability of members; mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries; and participation in each other's ordinations and installations of clergy, including bishops. It should also involve the establishment of structures for consultation to express, strengthen and enable common life, witness, and service, to the glory of God and the salvation of the world.⁷ As noted earlier, in areas where Churches minister within the same territory, full visible (or organic) unity should be explicitly named as the aim of their developing relationship.

Anglicans recognise that some of our non-episcopal ecumenical partners believe that mutual recognition of Churches as communities of the faithful in which the Gospel is truly preached and the sacraments rightly administered (Augsburg Confession §7; cf. 39 Articles, Art. 19) is enough to bring about full communion and interchangeability of ministries. However, Anglicans maintain that a further stage of *reconciliation* of Churches and ministries is a prerequisite for interchangeability of ministries. It is, therefore, important to note that Anglicans see a distinction between *mutual recognition* and *reconciliation*.

This distinction is expressed in the *Reuilly Common Statement* (1999), §27, summarised in *Growth in Communion* (2002), §72: "The Reuilly agreement brings the churches to a stage along the way to full visible unity. It is described as 'mutual recognition' which for Lutheran and Reformed Churches 'entails full communion, which includes full interchangeability of ministries'. Anglicans see this stage as a recognition or acknowledgement which leads to a further stage as 'the reconciliation of churches and ministries'."⁸

The *Niagara Report* (1987), §§112-116, set out practical steps by which Anglicans and Lutherans can realise a relationship of (full) communion. These are also summarised in *Growth in Communion*, §6:

Step 1: Regional or national churches recognise each other as sharing the same faith and hence as being a 'true Church of the Gospel'.

Step 2: Create provisional structures to express the degree of unity so far achieved and promote further growth. Examples of how to further growth include among other things: Eucharistic sharing, regular meetings of church

⁷ See, for instance, the Commitments in the *Waterloo Declaration* between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Lutheran Church in Canada (SD), not only to mutual Eucharistic hospitality and interchangeability of ministries, including mutual participation in episcopal ordinations, but also to regular consultation and collaboration joint meetings of national, regional and local decision-making bodies, and shared mission.

⁸ *Growth in Communion*, the report of the Anglican Lutheran International Working Group (2002), can be found here: www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102187/growthincommunion.pdf. The Reuilly Common Statement is available in: *Called to Witness and Service [the text of the Reuilly Statement and essays on Church, Eucharist, and Ministry]* (London, 1999). The Reuilly Declaration (not including the preliminary theological statement from which this comment is drawn) can be found in English and French here: www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/europe/reuilly-declaration.aspx.

leaders, invitation to speak at each other's synods, creating common agencies, joint theological education and mission programmes, limited interchange of ministers, and the twinning of congregations.

Step 3: The exploration of changing particular practices with respect to episcopate and the full recognition of ministries.

Step 4: Public declaration and celebration of full communion, after which 'joint consecration and installation of bishops and ordinations of new ministers should be possible.'

It is worth noting that these steps apply to Anglican relationships with other churches as well. Step 4 completes Step 3; at this point interchangeability of ministries becomes possible. Appendix 1 provides some helpful examples of agreements through which full communion and interchangeability of ministries and ministers have been achieved. However, Churches may not yet be at a point where they can take this step with integrity. In this case, it may be useful to note that Step 2, above, explicitly refers to the 'limited interchange of ministers'. There are a number of possibilities for interchange of ministries. This can help the Churches involved respond with a greater common flexibility to their pastoral and missional needs, but these stop short of full interchangeability. These usually provide for interchange within a specific named context. For instance, in many Anglican provinces, Local Ecumenical Projects or Partnerships or Shared Ecumenical Ministries allow ministers from different denominations to minister together to a congregation or congregations made of people drawn from those denominations.

For example, in England, Covenanted Partnerships in Extended Areas make it possible for Anglicans and Methodists to share ministry within the whole area and to develop a joint strategy for mission and the deployment of ministry. In Southern Africa, Covenanting Relationships between Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists have recognised that 'the ordained ministers of word and sacrament in the member churches of the CUC [Church Unity Commission] have been called and ordained by God in Christ through his church and exercise a sacramental, preaching, teaching and pastoral ministry in the church of God and not simply in the particular church to which they belong'. This has made it possible for "ordained ministers, *while remaining ministers of their own churches*, to exercise such ministry" in the other churches.⁹ Where Churches are not yet able to achieve full interchangeability of ministries through interchangeability of episcopal ministers, but intend to work towards this aim, then such covenanted partnerships may offer a useful intermediate step. More information about these schemes is in Appendix 2 below, and *The Vision Before Us*, the Kyoto Report of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (2009), considers these questions in further detail in the section "Holy Order in Ecumenical Dialogues" (pp. 106–131).¹⁰

⁹ See: www.thefreelibrary.com/Church+Unity+Commission+%28CUC%29.+%28Southern+Africa%29.-a092136481.

¹⁰ *The Vision Before Us* can be found here: www.anglicancommunion.org/media/107101/the_vision_before_us.pdf.

Conclusion

Learning to *recognise and receive one another in communion* is an aspect of our shared discipleship that demands time and effort on the part of our Churches. In many Churches of the Anglican Communion, the result of growing together has brought enormous joy and increased the desire to give visible expression to the gift of communion in which we participate. The way in which Anglicans have shaped ecumenical engagement draws on prayerful and critical reflection on both our complex theological tradition and the contexts in which our churches are called to mission and unity. We have, as a result, built up a certain expertise and wisdom in dealing with the concrete issue of how ecumenical issues relating to ordained ministry may be addressed both fruitfully and with integrity. We now offer the fruit of this work to the Churches of the Communion, as we join our prayer to the Lord's that we might all be one, so that the world might believe.

Appendix 1

Examples of recent agreements of (full) communion which include full interchangeability of ministries include:

Between Anglicans and Lutherans:

- The *Porvoo Common Statement* between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and Lutheran Churches of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden, the Latvian Church Abroad, and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (1996);
- *Called to Common Mission* between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (2001);
- The *Waterloo Agreement* between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Lutheran Church of Canada (2001).

Between Anglicans and Methodists:

- The *Covenant* between the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland (2002),¹¹ which led to the *Church of Ireland Bill to provide for interchangeability of ministry between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland* (2014)

Appendix 2

Examples of ecumenical covenanting relationships which enable ministers of another church to exercise their ministry in an Anglican congregation/context:

¹¹ The *Covenant* can be found here: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/47>.

- Information on Local Ecumenical Partnerships (at parish level) can be found, for instance, here (Church of England): www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/resources/leps/single-congregation-leps.aspx.

- Information about the Covenanted Partnerships in Extended Areas with the between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain can be found here: www.churchofengland.org/media/1323520/g-4%20covenant%20partnerships%20in%20extended%20areas%202011.pdf.

Appendix 3

IASCUF0 draws attention to the fact that Principle 94 in *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion* is both ambiguous and misleading with regards to interchangeability of ministries.

Principle 94 reads:

1. Ecclesial communion between two or more churches exists when a relationship is established in which each church believes the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith and recognises the apostolicity of the other.
2. Full communion involves the recognition of unity in faith, sacramental sharing, the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries, and the reciprocal enjoyment of shared spiritual, pastoral, liturgical and collegial resources.
3. Inter-communion is an ecclesial relationship in which at least one but not all of the elements of full communion is present.
4. Churches in communion become interdependent but remain autonomous.
5. The relationship of communion does not require the acceptance of all theological opinion, sacramental devotion or liturgical practice characteristic of another church.

As discussed above, while recognition of unity in faith, sacramental sharing, and shared spiritual, pastoral, liturgical and collegial resources may represent steps on the way to full communion – and thus stages of inter-communion – the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries can only come about in the context of a relationship of full communion and implies such a relationship. Consequently, Principle 94.3 does not apply to all the aspects listed in Principle 94.2 – specifically, mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries is not one step on the way to full communion.

We note also that the language of inter-communion is no longer current in ecumenical theology.