

The Anglican–Oriental Orthodox International Commission Communiqué, 2022



The Anglican–Oriental Orthodox International Commission held its ninth residential meeting from 24th to 29th of October 2022, at The Bethel Centre of the Coptic Orthodox Church, in Braintree, Essex, England.

The Commission greatly appreciated the generous hospitality of His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London. The Commission thanked the staff of the Bethel Centre and of the Coptic Orthodox Church Centre for the warmth of their welcome and the support offered to the work of the Commission.

Following its agreed agenda for the official dialogue, the Commission resumed its work on ‘The Inheritance of Ecumenical Councils in the Church’, which was begun in Cairo, Egypt in 2019. It had not been possible to meet physically in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. 2022 however had already been a year of encouraging ecumenical engagement through the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, and the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in which several Commission members had taken part.

The draft agreed statement on ‘The Inheritance of Ecumenical Councils in the Church’ was reviewed and finalized, drawing on existing ecumenical agreements, while preserving the distinctive characteristics of this dialogue.

The meeting took note of the new procedures for the reception of ecumenical texts adopted by the Anglican Communion and offered comments on them.

The Commission received papers on the topic of the Family of Churches and held a spirited and informative discussion. It further considered its work programme for the year ahead, with the intention of bringing a draft Agreed Statement on ‘Bishops and Synods’ to its next meeting in 2023.

The Commission was received by the Dean of St Alban’s Abbey, the Very Revd Jo Kelly-Moore, and prayed at the shrines of St Alban and St Amphibalus. It continued its pilgrimage with a visit to the Coptic Orthodox Church Centre and Cathedral of St George at Stevenage. The co-chairs signed the Agreed Statement of the Commission on ‘The Inheritance of Ecumenical Councils in the Church’ in the Cathedral, on behalf of its members.

The Commission is drawn from many different countries and cultures and represents communions which are global in their expression and outreach. As an indication of this richness, the meeting in Cairo was hosted by the Anglican Communion, as guests of the Anglican Diocese of Egypt, and the meeting in England was hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London.

In this global context, the challenges that face all our Churches are often similar. It was both inspiring and encouraging to share and hear news of our churches and communities around the world, and to hold one another in prayers of thanksgiving and support for all that God calls us to do for His world.

In response to the continuing crises in the Middle East, Commission members shared their experiences of working in the challenging environment of the hyper-inflation in Lebanon, and the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

The Commission was particularly mindful that since it last met, much had changed in the Caucasus, particularly in the aggression of Azerbaijan supported by Turkey, against the people of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh, that started at the height of the pandemic in 2020 and continues to this day.

The Commission members also reflected on the consequences of the conflicts in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, resulting in massive people displacement and food insecurity. To a different degree, these along with global economic instability, are issues impacting western nations. News was shared of the work of the churches in operating food banks and other diaconal activity in providing warm and open spaces.

We shared our Churches' experience of working in the hostile environment of war, aggressive secularism and religious intolerance, and its effect on their ministry.

In our meeting we were enriched by the prayers of each other's traditions. As we met we held in our prayers our concerns for the world, especially those who continue to suffer war, violence and persecution in Ukraine, Yemen and elsewhere.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Commission gave thanks to the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the mutual understanding, fellowship and friendship that had been experienced and deepened, and looks forward to the future in hope.

Present at the meeting in 2022

Anglican Communion

The Rt Revd Gregory K Cameron, Church in Wales (Co-Chair)
The Rt Revd Anthony Ball, Province of Alexandria
The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, Church of Ireland
The Revd Stephen Stavrou, Church of England
The Revd Canon Dr William Taylor, Church of England
The Revd Dr Gabrielle Thomas, Church of England
The Revd Neil Vigers, Anglican Communion Office (Co-Secretary)

Oriental Orthodox

Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria

His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos of London, United Kingdom (Co-Chair)
The Revd Fr Dr Pishoy Wasfy, Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada

Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch

His Eminence Archbishop Polycarpus Augin Aydin, The Netherlands
His Eminence Archbishop Severios Roger Akhrass, Lebanon (Co-Secretary)

Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church – Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin – Armenia

His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Great Britain and Ireland
Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church – Holy See of Cilicia, Antelias – Lebanon
The Very Revd Fr Hrant Tahanian, Canada

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

The Revd Fr Abate Gobena, United Kingdom

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

The Revd Fr Dr K M George, India
The Revd Fr Nithin Prasad Koshy, United Kingdom

The next meeting of the Commission will be hosted by the Anglican Communion, from 23 to 28 October 2023, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in the Episcopal (Anglican) Diocese of Jerusalem.