



Report of the Anglican Communion Legal Advisors' Network to the ACC 2023

The mission of the Church is carried out through its own ordered structures and takes place in territories governed by diverse civic legal systems. In every place, high quality legal advice facilitates every dimension of mission.

The Legal Advisors' Network was established in 2002 following a resolution at ACC-12 to produce a statement of shared canonical principles and to examine shared legal problems. It produced in 2008 *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion*.

More recently it has fallen into abeyance, and the work of revising the *Principles* for 2022 was carried out jointly by the Cardiff Centre for Law and Religion, the Ecclesiastical Law Society, and the ACO. A report on this revision process, made to the ACC standing committee, is included below.

Members are encouraged to review the revised [Principles of Canon Law](#).

The future

The need for a Legal Advisors' Network is greater than ever, to help provinces of the Communion assist one another with legal questions that arise. The energy and enthusiasm around the *Principles* revision presents an opportunity for a renewal of the Network and a celebration of an aspect of our unity. Our proposed resolutions to ACC-18 reflect this hope, and are based on the resolutions from ACC-12 and ACC-14.

This Anglican Consultative Council

- Thanks the Cardiff Centre for Law and Religion, the Ecclesiastical Law Society, and all those involved in producing the 2022 revision of the *Principles*, launched at the Lambeth Conference 2022;
- Commends the *Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion 2022* for study in every Province.

This Anglican Consultative Council

- Welcomes the renewal of the Network of Anglican Legal Advisors;
- Encourages the Network to study the Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion;
- Invites the Network to examine shared legal problems and possible solutions, and to provide reports to IASCUFO and the Anglican Consultative Council.

Respectfully Submitted

The Revd Russell Dewhurst,
Fellow of the Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University

The Ven Alan T Perry,
General Secretary, Anglican Church of Canada

Dear members of the ACC standing committee,

It was agreed that those involved in the second edition of *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion* would update the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council on the launch and initial reception of the revised *Principles*.

Background

While each church in the Anglican Communion is autonomous and governed according to its own legal system, there are common principles of canon law, which have been factually established by studying the law of the churches.

Meeting in Canterbury 2002, the Primates ‘recognized that the unwritten law common to the churches of the Communion and expressed as shared principles of canon law may be understood to constitute a fifth “instrument of unity”’ and endorsed the production of a draft statement of principles. This decision was based on the work of the legal academic Professor Norman Doe. Following extended study and work by an international network of legal advisors, in 2008 the Anglican Communion Office published *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion*, which was launched at the Lambeth Conference of that year. In 2009 the Anglican Consultative Council commended *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion* for study in every province (Resolution 14.20).

Since then, *Principles* has been cited in cases and in academic commentary, used by provinces developing their own constitutions and canons, and employed ecumenically, not least by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) which commended the *Principles* in its recent publication, *Walking together on the Way*.

The Production of a Second Edition

As churches have continued to legislate, the *Principles* stood in need of updating, and consequently plans for a second edition were set in train.

The production of the second edition was a joint project overseen by the Centre for Law and Religion at Cardiff University School of Law and Politics, the Ecclesiastical Law Society, and the Anglican Consultative Council. The CLR oversaw the work of drafting and revision; the ELS organized the initial reading groups and provided sponsorship; the ACC held the copyright and provided the copy editing and typesetting expertise coordinated by Neil Vigers.

Through the initial reading groups, the revision committee, and the consultation with provinces, over seventy canon lawyers across the Communion were involved. Input was received from provinces including Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia; Australia; Burundi; Canada; Central Africa; Ceylon; England; Hong Kong; Wales; West Africa; Scotland; Southern Africa; Sudan; the USA; and the West Indies.

The second edition was launched at the Lambeth Conference in August 2022, hosted by the Rt Revd Vicentia Kgabe, Bishop of Lesotho in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. The bishops attending expressed great interest in the application of the *Principles* to their dioceses and provinces. We were particularly grateful to the Archbishop of Canterbury for providing a foreword.

Initial Reception of the Second Edition

The methodology of the second edition was the subject of a paper by Norman Doe and Russell Dewhurst, presented to the *Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers* meeting in Rome in October 2022. The *Principles* are regularly used by the Anglican team of the colloquium. The growing canonical dimension of ecumenism is well-served by the *Principles*, which allow Anglicans to point to their commonly-held canonical basis.

At the conference celebrating 30 years of the LLM in Canon Law at Cardiff University Law School in October 2022, a panel discussed the *Principles*, including papers from the Rt Revd Christopher Hill (ARCIC) and the Ven Alan Perry (General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada). At the same conference, a panel led by ecumenist Dr Paul Goodliff traced the influence of the *Principles on the Principles of Christian Law* project, presented to the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe in August 2022. In the teaching of the LLM course itself, the *Principles* continue to be central to the teaching of the canon law of the wider Anglican Communion.

The widely-reported ‘Proposed Constitution for the Catholic Church’, published by the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, August 2022, ‘takes into account... in particular, the official “Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion”’.

Papers and reviews of the second edition are due to be published in the coming months in the *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* (Russell Dewhurst) and the *Journal of Anglican Studies* (Christopher Hill). A page of resources to support the *Principles* is available on the Ecclesiastical Law Society website. The work of the Committee was the basis of Russell Dewhurst’s presentation at the “Listening to the West” conference at the Institute for Ecumenical Studies at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome in January 2023 as part of the Synod on Synodality in the Roman Catholic Church.

Conclusion

It has been a very fruitful experience for the Centre for Law and Religion, the Ecclesiastical Law Society, and the Anglican Consultative Council to work together on the production of this second edition. Even in the five months since the launch of the second edition, the interest and activity in academic and ecumenical circles indicates that the project continues to be of great service to the Church.

We hope that the Standing Committee might consider a call or resolution (equivalent

to Resolution 14.20 made in 2008) to encourage study of the *Principles* more widely throughout the Communion.

Yours sincerely,

Russell Dewhurst, Chair of the Principles of Canon Law Revision Committee

Norman Doe, Director of the Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University

Elizabeth Wilson, Chair of the Ecclesiastical Law Society