



## The Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission

### Communiqué, 2024

The Anglican–Oriental Orthodox International Commission held its eleventh residential meeting from 21st to 25th of October 2024, at The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, in Armenia. It is noteworthy that this is the second time the Commission has held its meeting in Armenia, reflecting the Armenian Apostolic Church's strong commitment to ecumenical work and its gracious hospitality.

The Commission greatly appreciated the generous hospitality of His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II, the Supreme Head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Commission expressed gratitude to the Ecumenical Department of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, along with Fr Garegin and his team at the department, for their warm welcome and the valuable support provided to the Commission's work.

Following its agreed agenda for the official dialogue, the Commission explored how both communions live out their faith in the face of the world's changing contexts. The Commission commenced its work on the theme of 'Migration, Displacement, Witness, and Martyrdom.'

The Dialogue acknowledged that persecution of Christians is a global issue affecting not only religious freedom but also human rights, dignity, and the stability of communities. The importance of prayer, advocacy, and material support for persecuted Christians was also underscored as vital aspects of our response as Churches. The International Commission expressed deep concern over the displacement of the Armenian faithful from the region of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), recognizing the profound suffering and loss faced by the communities forced to leave their ancestral homes. Equally troubling is the destruction and erasure of cultural and religious heritage sites of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the region, which not only represents an unjust loss for the Armenian people but also for the entire Christian heritage.

The Commission was privileged to have heard firsthand from Bishop Vrtanes Abrahamyan, Primate of the Diocese of Artsakh, regarding the displacement of the Armenian faithful from Artsakh. Participants also had the opportunity to meet with displaced individuals sheltered near the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, where they listened to the moving stories of the people and heartfelt poems recited by their children.

The Commission received papers on the topics of 'Migration, Displacement, Witness, and Martyrdom.' It further considered its work programme for the year ahead.

The Commission acknowledged the significant impact of migration on Christian communities, particularly the challenge of retaining youth in the faith as they move abroad. Both churches share concerns over declining youth participation and the disruption in transmitting faith and tradition due to cultural assimilation. They are committed to ministering to diaspora communities, especially students, and see this shared challenge as an opportunity for



collaboration. Migration also raises ecclesiological questions, urging churches to reconsider their roles in a globalized world. The dialogue provided a valuable platform for addressing these challenges and adapting to evolving Christian communities.

The Commission members had the opportunity to visit the monasteries of Khor Virap and Noravank, where we witnessed first-hand both the continuity of service of the clergy of the church in these places and the devotion in which they are held by the Armenian people. The Commission members also visited the Memorial to the victims of the 20th-century Ottoman Genocide of the Armenians, a powerful reminder of the themes of displacement, suffering, and witness that are central to the Commission's discussions.

The Commission had an audience with His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II at his official residence in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. During the meeting, His Holiness emphasized the urgent need for the international community to recognize the displacement and suffering of the Armenian people as a matter of critical concern.

The International Commission calls upon governments, international bodies, and civil society to take meaningful action to safeguard the rights and freedoms of persecuted Christians, and to foster environments of peace, justice, and reconciliation. The Commission further urges the two families of Churches to consider a common date for prayer and action for persecuted Christians and commemoration of contemporary martyrs.

The Commission stands in solidarity with the Armenian Church, urging the global community to take action in protecting both the people and the sacred sites that are integral to their identity and faith.

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:**

#### **Anglicans**

The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson, Church of Ireland (Co-Chair)

Dr Liza Anderson, Episcopal Church (USA)

The Most Revd Dr Samy Shehata, Province of Alexandria

The Ven. Dr Edward Simonton OGS, Anglican Church of Canada

The Revd Canon Dr. William Taylor, Church of England

Dr Christopher Wells, Anglican Communion Office (Co-Secretary)

The Revd Neil Vigers, Anglican Communion Office



## **Oriental Orthodox**

### **Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria**

His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos of London, United Kingdom (Co-Chair)

The Rev'd Fr Dr Pishoy Wasfy, Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada

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

His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland

The Revd Fr Dr Garegin Hambardzumyan, Director of the Ecumenical Department at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia

### **Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church**

His Eminence Metropolitan Stephanos, United Kingdom

The Revd Fr Dr K. M. George, India

The next meeting of the Commission will take place on October 13th to 18th, 2025, hosted by the Anglican Communion.

### **Not present at the meeting**

His Eminence Archbishop Severios Roger Akhrass, Lebanon

His Eminence Archbishop Polycarpus Augin Aydin, The Netherlands

The Very Rev Fr Hrant Tahanian