

Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO)

**The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals:
Renewing the Instruments of the Anglican Communion**

Pursuant to ACC-18, Resolution 3(a)

Advent 2024

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Foreword

The Rt Revd Dr Graham Tomlin
Chair, Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order

The history of the Anglican Communion is a remarkable chapter in the story of God's grace and the recent spread of the gospel. Any recounting of world Christianity over the past two centuries must include the development of what is now an Anglican ecclesial presence in 165 countries.

A crucial part of this story is the place of the See of Canterbury and the rich inheritance that it represents. All Anglicans share the gospel of Jesus Christ as it was borne both to and from the British Isles, and flourished, by the grace of God, throughout the world. As the Communion has grown and matured, and relationships between the different equal and autonomous churches have developed in new networks and connections, all the member churches have come to see each other as sisters.

Over recent decades, however, the bonds of unity within the Anglican Communion have been stretched and strained amid deep disagreements concerning the ordained ministry of women within the Church and, more recently, questions about human identity and sexuality. The unity of the Church always has to be fought for, as the New Testament and our own experience testifies. This means addressing divisions as they arise among us with honesty and charity.

There is a real prospect of the fragmentation, or even dissolution, of the Communion over the coming years if we do not pay urgent attention to matters of ecclesiology: the contours of communion, the limits of diversity, and means of persevering together amid division.

The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO) is one of the main places where the Anglican Communion does its theological and ecclesiological reflection. It is a permanent commission of the Anglican Communion and reports to the Instruments of Communion. Its brief is to advise the Instruments and member churches on matters of doctrine, ecclesiology, liturgy, canon law, and ecumenical relations.

Its current membership is a wide-ranging and representative group, involving members from different parts of Africa, Asia, South and North America, Europe, and Australia. As recounted in the report below, this paper represents two years of work by the Commission. In December 2022, IASCUFO met for its annual meeting in Limuru, Kenya, at which we discussed the desirability of a piece of work looking at how we might address our differences and divisions in the Anglican Communion in a theologically and ecclesologically faithful way. This proposal was taken to the ACC in Ghana in February 2023, where the Commission was tasked with a renewed exploration of "structure and decision-making to help address our differences in the Anglican Communion" (ACC-18, res. 3(a)).

In taking up this work, IASCUFO was asked to carry forward the Lambeth Call on Anglican Identity (of the 2022 Lambeth Conference) to review the Instruments of Communion, and to seek to answer its two questions: "To what extent are the Instruments fit for purpose? To what extent might some (or all) of the Instruments be reconfigured to serve the Communion of today and the future?" (§3.3). In turn, IASCUFO also inherited the report of a Working Group of the ACC Standing Committee, which proposed a renewed, synodical approach to

the Instruments of Communion, with special attention to the place of lay leadership in the Church (picking up further themes from the Lambeth Calls of 2022).

A sub-group of IASCUFO engaged the initial stages of the project. This group met online, and then in person in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2023. The resulting paper went through various drafts and was the main item of business in the full Commission's next annual meeting in Cairo in December 2023. In turn, numerous people outside the Commission with extensive experience in inter-Anglican and ecumenical discussion commented on the paper. A next draft was presented to the Primates' Meeting in Rome in April/May 2024, which devoted four sessions to the paper. Since then, IASCUFO worked with the Primates' Standing Committee, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the whole of the Standing Committee of the ACC to refine the principal proposals of the paper, which form section IV.

The varied input that we have received has reflected the breadth of perspectives that may be found in the Anglican Communion on the issues that divide us, and the composition of our own Commission reflects the same breadth. Accordingly, we have sought in our meetings to speak frankly, to protect one another's conscience, and to cultivate a patient charity in discerning next faithful steps. All together, we present the following paper as the product of deep listening and honesty across theological and cultural difference. It proposes a way forward that all members of the Commission are able to commend. I am grateful to the members of the Commission for the generosity of spirit and resilience that they brought to our discussions.

The paper proposes seemingly small but significant changes to the way we work and understand ourselves as a Communion. It describes how we believe these changes faithfully reflect the spirit of Anglican discussion of these issues and how they present a natural and healthy response to the growth and changing nature of the Communion. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the Anglican Communion Office for the hard work they put into arranging our meetings, helping with drafting papers, and keeping the work moving forward.

Numerous colleagues helped us along the way. The Rev. Jack Lindsay, a doctoral candidate at the University of Aberdeen, provided us with a helpful paper on baptismal unity. Many others, too many to mention, offered their advice and wisdom, which has improved the final product enormously.

Having duly engaged all the Instruments of Communion as requested by ACC-18 (res. 3(a)), we offer this paper for the consideration of the wider Communion and our ecumenical colleagues, in advance of ACC-19 in 2026. We pray that the Holy Spirit will guide all those entrusted with carrying forward these proposals, that they may help us as a Communion speak honestly in charity with one another and advance the unity of the Church for which our Lord prayed. We also pray that what emerges from subsequent discussion will help prepare the Anglican Communion for the next phase of its mission in the world: a world which, as ever, stands in urgent need of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the wisdom of Christian faith.

Membership of IASCUFO

The Rt Revd Dr Graham Tomlin, Chair (England)
The Rt Revd Dr Steven Abbarow (Malaysia)
The Most Revd Dr Georges Titre Ande (Congo)
Dr Joanildo Burity (Brasil)
The Most Revd Dr Titus Chung (Singapore)
The Rt Rev Dr Dalcy Badeli Dlamini (Eswatini)
The Rt Revd Dr Joseph Galgalo (Kenya)
The Revd Dr Margaret Kalaiselvi (India)
The Rt Revd Dr Paul Korir (Kenya)
The Revd Jeanne Françoise Ndimubakunzi (Burundi)
The Revd Dr John Rogers (Barbados)
Mr Carlos Romero (Chile; member of ACC)
The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones (Wales)
The Rt Revd Joseph Royal (Canada)
The Most Revd Dr Samy Shehata (Egypt)
The Revd Dr Katherine Sonderegger (United States of America)
The Rt Revd Eugene Sutton (United States of America; member of ACC)
The Rt Revd Dr Richard Treloar (Australia)

The Rev Dr Andrew Atherstone, *Consultant* (England; member of ACC)
The Revd Dr Nak-Hyon Joseph Joo, *IALC Consultant* (South Korea)
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Executive Summary

Section I introduces the purpose and principal questions of the present paper. The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO) was asked by the 18th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (in Feb. 2023) to look again at structure and decision-making in the Anglican Communion to help address our differences and disagreements. IASCUFO's study should, ACC-18 said, affirm the importance of seeking to walk together to the highest degree possible and learning from our ecumenical conversations how to accommodate differentiation patiently and respectfully. IASCUFO should report back to the Instruments. The following paper was prepared for the April 2024 Primates' Meeting and revised subsequently in conversation with the Standing Committee of the ACC. We publish it now as an offering to the whole Communion and in aid of planning for ACC-19.

Several developments lent further urgency to IASCUFO's work, namely, actions by the General Synod and House of Bishops of the Church of England and responses by the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA) and others, in a context of already-established tensions. These developments helped IASCUFO both to sharpen and broaden its principal questions, to which the proposals of this paper correspond:

- a. How should we think about the faith and order of the Anglican Communion, in view of persistent disagreement and division between and within our churches? If we cannot all, at present, recognise one another fully, how can we speak honestly and directly about this on the way to discerning next steps?
- b. If an anachronistic colonial culture still shapes aspects of the Anglican Communion and its structures, are there adjustments that may be made to encourage a more sustained equality, mutuality, and flourishing of all member churches?

Section II recalls the landmark resolution 49 of Lambeth Conference 1930 that described the "nature and status of the Anglican Communion." The resolution is filled with an idealism that the present paper wishes, by turns, to receive, rearticulate, and in several ways revise. The resolution centred the communion of Anglican churches on "the See of Canterbury" hence the Church of England but looked out to the whole Christian world in hope of agreeing about the faith and the ordering of the one Church. Presuming the earlier notion of "local adaptation" from the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888, the conference of 1930 also built upon the "Appeal to All Christian People" of ten years prior. We will argue in section IV that the description needs updating, in service of a decentered, polycentric understanding of the mission of the Church. But the summons of 1930 to catholicity and apostolicity, to local expression of Christian life, and to common counsel in service of a wider, "visibly united fellowship" of all Christians and churches remains inspiring and worthy of God's calling of the Church to holy agreement.

Section III accordingly seeks to describe anew the vocation of Anglicanism with reference to the four ancient marks of the Church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

- As *one* body of Christ, the Church cannot be separated, though Christian divisions do incur wounds. In this context, to seek a "highest degree of communion" means both accepting gratefully that which is shared and speaking honestly about differences and disagreements. Anglican churches can agree on many aspects of faith and order and at the same time accommodate degrees of differentiation with a spirit of patience.
- The call to *holiness* or sanctity in the Church helps us recognise the scandalous nature of Anglican disputes and divisions concerning marriage and sexuality and should inspire us to find faithful solutions. Holy Scripture sets forth a right expectation of

truthful speech and sustained love, founded in Christ's enactment of reconciliation. All parties and sides have responsibilities here.

- The visible breadth and structural recognisability of the *catholic* Church across time and place presumes an articulation of the orthodox faith that preserves a proper diversity. St. Augustine of Hippo's engagements with the Donatists in the 4th and 5th centuries set forth a right doctrine that should be recalled and defended. Augustine (and Richard Hooker after him) insists both on the priority of discerning truth and the necessity of contestation and argument in the Church. God will order and perfect the Church in the end, but not before.
- From the start, the Anglican Communion has sought to receive and hand on the *apostolic* faith and mission of the Church in partnership with other Christians and churches, duly attuned to their gifts and variety. The witness of the Church in times of deep division requires working at forms of unity within disagreement. Free association has enabled relationships of full communion between one or more Anglican churches and churches outside the Communion, as well as the establishing of United Churches. Networks of shared concern, regional groupings, and doctrinally focused coalitions have all found their place. These groups sustain their own initiatives, enrich the sharing of the sister churches of the Anglican Communion, and hold potential to promote stronger links throughout global Christianity.

Section IV presents two principal proposals for the consideration of the Instruments of Communion, particularly in advance of ACC-19 in 2026. Developed in conversation between IASCUFO and the Standing Committee of the ACC (incorporating the Primates' Standing Committee and the Archbishop of Canterbury), the proposals suggest shifts in the conceptualisation and organisation of the Anglican Communion and its Instruments to account for changes of the last century and to encourage a maximal sharing in leadership that reflects our identity and ideals.

The first proposal offers a narrow revision of resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference that seeks to preserve its crystallisation of core Anglican commitments. (a) Seeking to uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order (b) as a local expression of Christian faith, life and worship within each of their territories, (c) the churches of the Anglican Communion are bound together through their shared inheritance, mutual service, common counsel in conference, and historic connection with the See of Canterbury, by which they seek interdependently to foster the highest degree of communion possible.

The second proposal suggests broadening how the meetings of the Instruments of Communion are called, convened, chaired, and presided over, in order to diversify the face of the Instruments of Communion. We propose (a) a rotating presidency of the Anglican Consultative Council between the five regions of the Communion, elected from the membership of the Primates' Meeting by the same; and (b) an enhanced role for the Primates' Standing Committee in the calling and convening of both Primates' Meetings and the Lambeth Conference. Ceding the expectation that the Archbishop of Canterbury convenes and presides at all meetings of the Communion will enable the personal and pastoral aspects of the archbishop's ministry to be given and received, and fits with the identity and ideals of the Anglican Communion in a post-colonial era. The leadership of the Communion should look like the Communion.

Section V reviews the foregoing proposals, alongside complementary suggestions regarding each of the Instruments of Communion. **Section VI** provides a brief conclusion.

THE NAIROBI-CAIRO PROPOSALS

Renewing the Instruments of the Anglican Communion

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.... Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching.... Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. —Eph. 4:2-5, 14-15

I. Introduction

Purpose of the present paper

1. The history of the Anglican Communion is the story of the emergence of a family of churches, broadly born of common parentage in England, marked by a shared inheritance both from the Protestant Reformation and an earlier Western and Catholic patrimony. The Elizabethan Settlement established for the Church of England a breadth of spirituality and theology within a normative pattern of prayer and an assumed unity of faith and order, which set the terms for subsequent Anglican identity. The era of the Anglican Communion, dating from the first Lambeth Conference of 1867, emerged alongside a providential, unplanned pattern of explosive missionary growth, for which the Communion has continually sought to develop supportive structures, while protecting the autonomy of its member churches.
2. The present paper is written at a difficult time in the life of the Anglican Communion. Many are asking whether the churches of the Communion can carry on together as one family, amid not only great diversity but deep disagreement and division. Others wonder whether an unattractive colonial residue still clings to the structures of the Communion and may need correcting. The questions and concerns are legitimate and understandable. Accordingly, they deserve careful attention.
3. IASCUFO proposed to the 18th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-18, meeting in Accra, Ghana, in February 2023) a renewed exploration of “structure and decision-making to help address our differences in the Anglican Communion.” This exploration would affirm “the importance of seeking to walk together to the highest degree possible and learning from our ecumenical conversations how to accommodate differentiation patiently and respectfully.” This proposal was received and accepted by ACC-18, in a resolution that asked IASCUFO “to proceed with this work and report its progress to the Instruments of Communion,” including “any proposals that may impact the ACC constitution.”¹ An earlier draft of the present paper was prepared for the April 2024 Primates’

¹ ACC-18, Resolution 3(a), “Good Differentiation,” available online. The resolution reads, in full: “The Anglican Consultative Council: 1. Welcomes the proposal from the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO) to explore theological questions regarding structure and decision-making to help address our differences in the Anglican Communion; 2. Affirms the importance of seeking to walk together to the highest degree possible, and learning from our ecumenical conversations how to accommodate differentiation patiently and respectfully; 3. Asks IASCUFO for any proposals that may impact the ACC

Meeting. It was revised in conversation, successively, with the Primates' Standing Committee and Archbishop of Canterbury, and with the whole of the Standing Committee of the ACC. We publish it now as an offering to the wider Communion and our ecumenical colleagues, in advance of ACC-19 in 2026.

4. In the following pages, we shall argue that renewed attention to the rationale for Anglican life together and for the Instruments of Communion that we share is both necessary in the context of present divisions and consistent with our longstanding commitments and ideals.² This will entail a sustained conversation about the theological basis of our churches: founded in the holy Scriptures, nurtured by our sacramental life, and set forth in our formularies, prayer books, canons, and ecumenical agreements. The conversation must, moreover, display a character of humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance, summarised in the Letter to the Ephesians as “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4). Without these habits and virtues, we cannot hope to hear God nor reach agreement about the truth of the Gospel. The present paper will focus on sketching the latter character and pattern, according to which Anglicans may, by God’s grace, manage to persist in the coming years with theological discernment. We shall also propose several specific adjustments to the Instruments, alongside an updated description of the Anglican Communion since the landmark resolution of the 1930 Lambeth Conference.
5. The present paper, and its proposals, should be read not as an end but as the beginning of a new conversation. We offer our suggestions for next steps to all four Instruments of Communion for their consideration and wise response. We pray that God in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will enable the Anglican Communion, and all Christians and churches, to discern, receive, and articulate together the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, so that the world may believe.

Recent Anglican developments

6. Over the last years of meeting, prayer, discussion, research, and writing, several developments in real time have lent further urgency to IASCUFO’s work. Immediately before ACC-18, the February 2023 meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England, through its “Living in Love and Faith” process, welcomed the House of Bishops’ work and proposals for a set of “Prayers of Love and Faith” that would include prayers of blessing for persons in same-sex unions. In December 2023, the House of Bishops formally commended the Prayers of Love and Faith. Subsequent meetings of the General Synod have continued to reflect on what it may mean both to allow same-sex couples to receive God’s blessing and yet to preserve the Church of England’s traditional doctrine of marriage. Questions relating to teaching and discipline for clergy who are in committed same-sex relationships, and the question of whether some structural settlement is needed to accommodate new degrees of distance between groups within the Church of England, have yet to be resolved.

constitution to be brought for full discussion to ACC-19; and 4. Asks IASCUFO to proceed with this work and report its progress to the Instruments of Communion.”

² We have taken as a starting point and constant reference for our work IASCUFO’s earlier research paper *Towards a Symphony of Instruments: A Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion* (London: ACC, 2015), available online. We build upon, and in some cases depart from, that paper in order to provide a theological account of differentiation-in-communion, per the mandate of the present paper (see previous note), and to propose several adjustments to the Instruments of Communion.

7. Numerous responses to the Church of England's General Synod have appeared from various quarters of the Communion. Especially significant for the purposes of the present paper was the "Ash Wednesday Statement" from the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA), signed by 10 primates of churches of the Communion. As the GSFA primates wrote, "the Church of England has chosen to break communion with those provinces [that] remain faithful to the historic biblical faith expressed in the Anglican formularies." The GSFA was, as a result, "no longer able to recognise the present Archbishop of Canterbury as the 'first among equals' Leader of the global Communion."³
8. The GSFA had already issued its Covenanted Structure in 2019 (revised in 2021) as a plan for the intensification of communion within and between churches of the Global South.⁴ As the text emphasises, it is not intended as an alternative to the wider Communion and its instruments. Rather, the structure sets forth a voluntary means of articulating the faith and order of Global South churches, both as a matter of conviction and as a witness and encouragement to the wider Communion. In its report to ACC-18, IASCUFO wrote that the "proposed covenantal structure of the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches... deserves careful consideration."⁵

Principal questions of the present paper

9. These developments have helped IASCUFO both to sharpen and broaden what it takes to be the principal questions that the churches of the Anglican Communion should consider; questions with which Anglicans have wrestled, to varying degrees, since 1867, that can finally only be answered in Christ and his gospel.
 - a. How should we think about the faith and order of the Anglican Communion, in view of persistent disagreement and division between and within our churches? If we cannot all, at present, recognise one another fully, how can we speak honestly and directly about this on the way to discerning next steps?
 - b. If an anachronistic colonial culture still shapes aspects of the Anglican Communion and its structures, are there adjustments that may be made to encourage a more sustained equality, mutuality, and flourishing of all member churches?
10. IASCUFO views these questions as both distinct and intertwined. Together, they have shaped the interests and arguments of the following pages and inspired the proposals that we set forth in the final sections. As we shall seek to show, both questions are bound up with the historical character of the Anglican Communion, which has continued to evolve, and which has sought to articulate a vision of its purpose that remains compelling and worthy of our collective commitment.

³ "Ash Wednesday Statement of GSFA Primates on the Church of England's Decision Regarding the Blessing of Same Sex Unions" (13 Feb. 2023). See, for a similarly searching response in a different register, two pastoral letters from the four bishops of Southeast Asia (of 18 Feb. 2023 and 1 March 2024), the latter of which acknowledges "that given recent developments, the relationship of our province with the Church of England (C of E) has been put in a fragile state." The letter goes on to comment "that many in the C of E remain faithful to Scripture.... We must and should maintain our relationship with these orthodox believers, and continue to pray and support them during this challenging period. At the same time, we declare in the strongest terms our disaffiliation from those who do support it." All are available online.

⁴ Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA), *A Covenantal Structure for the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches* (2021), available online.

⁵ IASCUFO, "A proposal to the ACC from the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order," submitted to ACC-18 (Feb. 2023), available online.

II. Lambeth Conference 1930: Ideals of Anglican faith and order

11. In identifying our principal questions, IASCUFO has recalled the landmark description of the “nature and status of the Anglican Communion” adopted by resolution of the Lambeth Conference of 1930. All conversations about Anglican identity since 1930 have returned, explicitly or implicitly, to this resolution, lending it a *de facto* authority. No other statement has taken its place.⁶
12. The resolution noted the shared “communion” of all Anglican dioceses, provinces, and regional churches “with the See of Canterbury,” by which was meant a fullness of shared faith and life inherited from and centred on the Church of England.⁷ It marked the expectation that Anglican churches around the world will “uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their several Churches.” And, duly noting the particularity or autonomy of Anglican churches, as well as the absence of “a central legislative and executive authority” in the Anglican Communion, the bishops looked to the “mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel” of their own conferring.⁸
13. The ideal of this 1930 resolution has served the Anglican Communion well, and in many ways propelled the movement toward a hoped-for greater degree of “mutual responsibility and interdependence,” in the famous phrase of the 1963 Toronto Congress.⁹ Following the founding of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in 1968 and the Primates’ Meeting in 1978, the 1988 Lambeth Conference turned once more to the question of the structures of the Communion, and looked to two inter-Anglican standing commissions (on doctrine and ecumenism) to take up and advance this work. The *Virginia* (1997) and *Windsor* (2004) reports, and the Anglican Communion Covenant (2009), all proposed developments in the hope of re-articulating and deepening an Anglican consensus about catholic and apostolic faith and order.
14. The last century of vigorous Anglican reflection about the character of communion has assumed several of the interests and ideals of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, all of which continue to shape our conversations, even in ways we may not realise. Naming three of these ideals now will help to make sense of our subsequent reflections on the marks of the Church and suggestions about next steps.

⁶ LC 1930, resolution 49. All Lambeth Conference resolutions are available online at anglicancommunion.org. For recent examples of deploying this resolution, see Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report* (London: ACC, 2004; available online), §48; Anglican Communion Covenant (2009; available online), §3.1.2; GSFA, *Covenantal Structure*, §§1.1, 3.6. Cf. Primates’ Task Group, “The Gift, Call and Challenge of Communion” (2023; available at anglicancommunion.org), §24, for an uncited revision of resolution 49 that runs in a similar direction to what we will propose below.

⁷ LC 1930, resolution 49, read alongside the first sentence of the encyclical letter of LC 1930 (identical to the first sentence of the encyclical letter of LC 1920): “We, Archbishops and Bishops of the Holy Catholic Church in full communion with the Church of England, ...assembled from divers parts of the earth at Lambeth...” (emphasis added). See *The Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1930); available online at anglicanhistory.org.

⁸ *Ibid.* The immediately prior resolution 48 of LC 1930 affirmed “that the true constitution of the Catholic Church involves the principle of the autonomy of particular Churches based upon a common faith and order.”

⁹ Toronto Anglican Congress, *Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ* (1963), available online. Writ as a manifesto of sorts, the short statement asked “whether our structures are appropriate to our world and the church as it is, and if not, how they should be changed.” Cf. LC 1968, resolution 67; ACC-12, resolution 34.

One faith and order

15. It is worth noting what may or may not be obvious: Anglican churches presumed from the start that a given faith and order was available and could be specified. The Church of England's own ordered life stood as the measure for most Anglican churches in this regard at least until 1930, and some reference to agreement with the faith of the Church of England, or "communion with the See of Canterbury," is still common in many constitutions of churches of the Communion.¹⁰ In terms of doctrine, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal were preeminent, while the 39 Articles served as a convenient touchstone of Anglican faith, even when formal subscription to the Articles was not everywhere required. The embrace by the 1888 Lambeth Conference of the proposed "Quadrilateral" of Scripture, Nicene Creed, dominical sacraments, and "historic episcopate, locally adapted" has served as a constant point of reference for "inherent parts," at least, of the deposit of "Faith and Order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world."¹¹

Ideals of unity

16. All of the earliest Lambeth Conferences, conscious of the rapid diversification of the Communion, with a memory of having secured a comprehensiveness across parties during and after the Reformation era, articulated an interest in and commitment to the visible unity of the Church.¹²
17. Practically, this meant that Anglican statements about faith and order avoided saying more than was required (lest further hurdles to ecclesial reconciliation be erected) and anticipated a subsuming of the Anglican Communion into something larger and more comprehensive. The Lambeth Conference of 1930 bore witness to this vocation to unity when the bishops wrote in their encyclical letter of a "duty to envisage the one Church of Christ as it will be when reunited, and to shape the Churches of our own Communion so that they will, even now, conform as much as possible to that ideal, and be ready to take their place within it, when it is realised."¹³ This line of thinking inspired the addition of a final sentence to resolution 49's description of the Anglican Communion. As the bishops wrote: "The conference makes this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship."¹⁴
18. In making such statements, the bishops at the 1930 Lambeth Conference were not casting into doubt Anglican articulations of the faith "in its entirety." The faith "is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer." Moreover, all Anglican churches rightly "refuse," as does the Church of England, "to accept any statement, or practice, as of authority, which is not consistent with the Holy Scriptures and the understanding and practice of our religion as

¹⁰ See Alexander Ross, *A Still More Excellent Way: Authority and Polity in the Anglican Communion* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 96-100.

¹¹ "Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral," adopted by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (1886), and LC 1888, resolution 11, available at anglicancommunion.org. The purpose of the Quadrilateral was to encourage cooperation with other communions of churches "on the basis of a common Faith and Order." In this way, all might "discountenance schism" and "heal the wounds of the Body of Christ."

¹² The "Appeal to All Christian People" (resolution 9) of the 1920 Lambeth Conference remains the most memorable and influential monument in this regard. Cf. LC 1948, resolution 56.

¹³ LC 1930, *Encyclical Letter*.

¹⁴ LC 1930, resolution 49. Cf. LC 1948, resolution 74.

exhibited in the undivided Church.” In all of this, Anglican churches “are both Catholic and Evangelical. This is still today a true description of the facts and ideals of the Anglican Communion.”¹⁵

19. At the same time, the bishops remarked with interest that

these very ideals are working a change. Every Church of our Communion is endeavouring to do for the country where it exists the service which the Church of England has done for England — to represent the Christian religion and the Catholic Faith in a manner congenial to the people of the land, and to give scope to their genius in the development of Christian life and worship. As the Churches founded by our Missions in India, China, Japan or Africa, more and more fully achieve this purpose, they may, in many ways, grow less and less like to each other and to their Mother, and, in consequence, less and less Anglican, though no less true to Catholic faith and order.¹⁶

20. Here, by *Anglican* the bishops meant English or “Anglo-Saxon” (as is clear by comparing a similar statement of the 1920 Lambeth Conference¹⁷), and by *Catholic* they meant universal or ancient: the aforementioned “religion as exhibited in the undivided Church.” All of this was cause for celebration. As the bishops had said 10 years prior, “the blessing which has rested upon” the work of the Communion “has brought it to a new point of view,” the more as “its centre of gravity is shifting,” namely, away from England and the West to parts South and East. Accordingly, the Anglican Communion “presents an example on a small scale of the problems which attach to the unity of a Universal Church. As the years go on, its ideals must become less Anglican [i.e., English] and more Catholic. It cannot look to any bonds of union holding it together, other than those which should hold together the Catholic Church itself.”¹⁸

21. We shall return to this astonishing vision of Anglican identity when we come to our proposal about updating the description of the Anglican Communion produced by the Lambeth Conference of 1930. For now, however, we need to note one more thread in these earliest reflections on the vocation of Anglicanism.

¹⁵ LC 1930, *Encyclical Letter*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ “The Anglican Communion of today is a federation of churches, some national, some regional, but no longer predominantly Anglo-Saxon in race, nor can it be expected that it will attach special value to Anglo-Saxon traditions” (LC 1920, “Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider Relation to and Reunion with Other Churches” in *The Six Lambeth Conferences, 1867-1920*, ed. Lord Davidson of Lambeth [SPCK, 1929], “Appendix,” p. 137; available online at anglicanhistory.org).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* The first part of this paragraph of the report makes for fascinating reading in light of contemporary Anglican discussions: “At the date of the first Lambeth Conference, 1867, this Communion had taken the form of a federation of self-governing Churches, held together for the most part without legal sanctions by a common reverence for the same traditions and a common use of a Prayer Book which, in spite of some local variations, was virtually the same. Our missionary workers were then planting churches among nations very different from the Anglo-Saxon race and from one another, but as yet these had shewn but little growth. In the interval between that time and the present there have grown up indigenous Churches in China, in Japan, in East and West Africa, in each of which the English members are but a handful of strangers and sojourners, some engaged in missionary work, some in secular business. In India the Church includes large numbers both of British and Indian members: the emergence of a National Church, claiming freedom to regulate its own affairs, is only a matter of time.” Cf. similarly, 86 years on, Archbishop Rowan Williams, “Challenge and Hope of Being an Anglican Today” (27 June 2006, available online).

Interest in conciliarity

22. Because the bishops meeting at the first seven Lambeth Conferences had a clear sense of the inherent challenges of their admittedly idealistic course, they repeatedly set themselves some homework under the headings “synod” and “council.” The Archbishop of Canterbury had indicated in advance the strictly non-synodical nature of their first meeting in 1867. In the event, however, the bishops felt compelled to affirm the principle that “unity in faith and discipline will be best maintained among the several branches of the Anglican Communion by due and canonical subordination of the synods of the several branches to the higher authority of a synod or synods above them.”¹⁹ Similarly, the 1930 encyclical letter, noting the expectation of “progressive diversity within the unity of the Anglican Churches” (and all the more as ecumenical ventures in various places took flight²⁰), anticipated a need to join up the “federation” of Anglican churches with “a larger federation of much less homogeneous Churches.” To carry this off, “councils of bishops” would be, as “in antiquity, ... the appropriate organ, by which the unity of distant Churches can find expression without any derogation from their rightful autonomy.” In this case, the Lambeth Conference, “with its strict adherence to purely advisory functions,” could perhaps be viewed as “preparing our minds for participation in the Councils of a larger and more important community of Churches. Every extension of this circle of visible fellowship would increase the power of the Church to witness to its Lord by its unity.”²¹

Looking ahead

23. These ideals may seem far off from the present-day realities of the Anglican Communion. They set the terms, however, for the last century of Anglican attempts at agreement, accountability, and even provisional decision-making. They also anticipated some of the challenges the Communion has faced in these regards. As we turn for the remainder of this paper to offer proposals for the present and future of the Anglican family, we will do well to remember these earlier aspects of faith and order and ask how they may be viewed today. Which aspects of these past ideals and commitments can be carried forward in the near term, and what perhaps needs to be set aside for now, or otherwise folded into subsequent faithful steps, by the grace and mercy of God?

¹⁹ LC 1867, resolution 4. Cf. *Windsor Report* §102 and its quotation of commentary by Owen Chadwick.

²⁰ LC 1930, *Encyclical Letter*: “we have before us a prospect of the restoration of communion with Churches which are, in no sense, Anglican. Our negotiations with the Orthodox Church and the Old Catholics illustrate this possibility in one direction, and the creation of united Churches — such as that proposed in India — illustrates it in another.”

²¹ *Ibid.*

III. The Marks of the Church

24. The Declaration of Assent within the Church of England, used at all ordinations and licensings of clergy — analogues of which may be found in churches around the Anglican Communion — begins thus: “The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Anglican churches, and the Anglican Communion, have never claimed to be the totality of the Church, or the true Church, but only *part of* the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We have taken our membership in the one Church with utmost seriousness, investing ourselves in ancient patterns of order and seeking to guard the apostolic deposit of faith. At the same time, we have sought to place our ecclesial identity in service of a wider consensus and unity with all Christians. As we seek to make sense of the doctrinal and moral disagreements, historic legacies, cultural differences, and structural fracturing of Anglicans, we should continually recall, and seek to serve, the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Church. Likewise, as we contemplate changes or reforms in the Anglican Communion, we will do well to map them onto these ancient credal marks.

(1) The Unity of the Church

One body of Christ

25. Unity is the first, fundamental mark of the Church, enacted by God in his Son Jesus Christ, the head of the Church (Eph. 1:22). There is just one body of Christ, which cannot be separated. It can, however, incur wounds, as the divisions of Christians and churches painfully demonstrates. These facts of unity are perhaps clearest in the Letter to the Ephesians, which asserts both that “there is one body and one Spirit” and that “you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:4-6). God has formed the Church into one body; *therefore*, the faithful are called “to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:3).
26. St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians presents a similar view of the one body and one Spirit, sacramentally enacted as a unity of faith, and it applies them in a series of encouragements and challenges to a divided church: to grow more deeply and fully into the communion established by God in Christ (1 Cor. 1:9ff.), to observe appropriate discipline as befits brothers and sisters “inside the church” (5:11-12), to “give no offence” (10:32), to “discern the body” (11:29), to “wait for one another” (11:33), and “to invest with the greater honour those parts of the body which we think less honourable” (12:23). All who have been made members of this body visibly, by washing of water and the Word, and anointing in his Spirit (1 Cor. 1:13,18 and 3:16; cf. Eph. 5:26), have embarked upon the *beginning* of the pilgrimage of faith and obedience.²²

²² See LC 1920, resolution 9 (“Reunion of Christendom”), §2: “We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ which is his Body.” Cf. Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism: Unitatis redintegratio* (1964), §3.1: “all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ’s body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church,” citing the Council of Florence and St. Augustine of Hippo (cf. *ibid.*, §22.1). Cf. the work of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) since 1968, *passim*; World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982). All are available online.

27. As the ecumenical movement has long professed, the unity of the Church is both gift and call.²³ As gift, the communion of the Church — her agreement in faith, her visible ordering, and her mission — is not ours to achieve; it is God’s own accomplishment in Christ who “reconciles all things to himself, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:19-20; cf. Eph. 4:3). As call, the communion of the Church — her faith, order, and mission — remains something towards which we strive, as the Lord commissioned his disciples on the night he was betrayed, that they and we all *may*, through obedience, mutual service, and love, be one (see John 17; cf. Phil. 4:2).

Anglican divisions

28. The Anglican Communion has known a great deal of the joys and pains of the body of Christ, and it has struggled in recent years to maintain its own unity, even as it has continued to engage in ecumenical conversation. The Lambeth Conference of 2008 affirmed again the Anglican commitment to “full, visible unity” with all Christians. The Communion “has never seen its life as a family of Churches as self-sufficient.” Yet, 230 bishops felt unable to attend the conference, due, as the official report of the conference explained, to contemporary “divisions between Anglicans and the actions by certain provinces that have provoked them.” The report continued: “Our ecumenical partners are sometimes bewildered by apparent Anglican inconsistency especially where issues of authority and ecclesiology are concerned. This is immediately relevant to the dilemmas facing this Conference.”²⁴ Similarly at Lambeth Conference 2022, with all the bishops of three Anglican member churches absent, and others who attended choosing not to receive Holy Communion at the conference Eucharists, the Call on Christian Unity listed “Anglican divisions” among the “wounds in the body of Christ” in need of redress.²⁵ A separate call on reconciliation returned to the matter, urging the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Standing Committee of the ACC “to renew and refresh the conversation with our sisters and brothers in provinces and dioceses unable to join us at Lambeth Conference 2022, seeking to build a fuller life together as an Anglican family of churches.”²⁶
29. It is fitting for divided Anglicans to start here, with a confession of our own sin, and failure to love one another “to the end” as a family of Christians (John 13:1). No high-minded discussion of the unity of the Church can wish away these realities, and we should not seek to escape them. Rather, we should look here, at the tears in the fabric of Anglican faith and order, to see how they may be mended.²⁷ Reporting on these challenges in 2008, the Windsor Continuation Group urged the Communion to tend to its “ecclesial deficit,” of which its apparent paralysis in the face of conflict was symptomatic.²⁸
30. While the fullness of our communion one with another was rarely questioned until recently, the fact of ecclesial autonomy and “progressive diversity” of Anglican churches has made it

²³ For three Anglican appropriations, see Anglican Communion Covenant, Introduction §3 and section §2.1; the Hiroshima Report of the International Reformed–Anglican Dialogue (IRAD), *Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling* (2020); Primates’ Task Group, “The Gift, Call and Challenge of Communion.”

²⁴ LC 2008, *Lambeth Indaba* §71 (citing similar resolutions from 1878 and 1998) and §79.

²⁵ LC 2022, *Lambeth Call: Christian Unity*, §§1.5 and 2.3.3.

²⁶ LC 2022, *Lambeth Call: Reconciliation*, §4.7.

²⁷ See “A Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in Lambeth Palace” (16 Oct. 2003, available online), which expressed concern that deepening divisions among Anglicans over sexuality would “tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level.”

²⁸ Windsor Continuation Group, “Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury” (17 Dec. 2008), §§50-59; available online. Cf. ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to Be the Church — Local, Regional, Universal* (London: SPCK, 2018), §§77-78; available online.

hard to resolve disagreements and avoid divisions.²⁹ Archbishop Runcie spoke about this at Lambeth Conference 1988 with reference to “the shibboleth of autonomy,” according to which independence is preferred over interdependence. This ought not to be the case, he said, “if we really want unity within the Anglican Communion.... Or is our paramount concern the preservation of promotion of that particular expression of Anglicanism which has developed within the culture of our own province? We have reached the stage in the growth of the Communion,” he concluded, “when we must begin to make radical choices, or growth will imperceptibly turn to decay. I believe the choice between independence and interdependence, already set before us as a Communion in embryo twenty-five years ago [at the Toronto Congress], is quite simply the choice between unity or gradual fragmentation.”³⁰

Degrees of communion

31. The familiar phrase “highest degree of communion possible” was developed at this time by the Anglican Communion out of our debates about the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate and has served ever since as a summons to “respect the decision and attitudes of other provinces... without such respect necessarily indicating acceptance of the principles involved.”³¹ The reference to *degrees* here is borrowed from ecumenical theology, and refers to the fact that communion (*koinonia*) is not binary, yielding simple judgments of “in” or “out.” It rather touches upon several, interconnected aspects, actions, and commitments that can be more and less “fully” shared with others.³² As churches find themselves in more and less complete agreement about matters considered essential or otherwise important, by at least one if not all parties, they must determine where they stand. If full communion is not possible at present, some marking of the diminishment — variously described as a *division*, *wound*, or *impairment* — is appropriate, alongside an affirmation of that which is still shared.
32. Questions therefore arise about what *is* still shared, and about how properly to classify the seriousness of a given disagreement. As is well known, the Anglican Communion found a way to negotiate an agreement about the ordination of women, which met with the blessing of successive Lambeth Conferences, tied to a theology of reception.³³ We have not yet found our way through disagreements and divisions surrounding questions of homosexuality and marriage.³⁴ The teaching of resolution I.10 of Lambeth Conference 1998 that marriage is

²⁹ Again, LC 1930, *Encyclical Letter*. This problem is named repeatedly by IASCUFO in its 2012 paper *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, as it collects and organises the discussions of the last half century. Cf. GSFA, *Covenantal Structure*, *passim*.

³⁰ Robert Runcie, “Opening Address to the Lambeth Conference” in *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (The Lambeth Conference 1988), pp. 16 and 17; quoted at *Windsor Report* §66, and in the Report of the ad hoc sub-commission of IARCCUM, “Ecclesiological Reflections on the Current Situation in the Anglican Communion in the Light of ARCIC” (8 June 2004), §15; available online. Cf. ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way*, §137.

³¹ LC 1988, resolution 1.1. Cf. the sustained use of *highest degree of communion possible* in *The Windsor Report*. Cf. Anglican Communion Covenant, §3.2.7.

³² See, e.g., Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism* §3.1: men and women “who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church — whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church — do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion.” Cf. ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way*, §21.

³³ LC 1998 resolution III.2(b) called upon “the provinces of the Communion to uphold the principle of ‘Open Reception’ as it relates to the ordination of women to the priesthood as indicated by the Eames Commission; noting that ‘reception is a long and spiritual process.’” III.2(d) of the same resolution called upon the “Provinces of the Communion to make such provision, including appropriate episcopal ministry, as will enable them to live in the highest degree of Communion possible, recognising that there is and should be no compulsion on any bishop in matters concerning ordination or licensing.”

³⁴ See *The Windsor Report*’s narration of this difference at §§12-21.

“between a man and a woman” and “homosexual practice [is] incompatible with Scripture” has, for the majority of the Communion, stood as a clear indication of its “mind,” as *The Windsor Report* recounted twenty years ago. In view of such a clear statement at a Lambeth Conference, it is hard to invoke the doctrine of reception.³⁵ Probably for this reason, the final version of the Lambeth Call on Human Dignity of Lambeth Conference 2022 does not propose a settlement *per se* but rather records the fact of two distinct teachings arrived at “after careful theological reflection.” Lacking a clear way forward, the Call concludes that Anglicans should “remain committed to listening and walking together despite our deep disagreement on these issues.”³⁶

33. How can we speak of Anglican unity in this context? The resolution of Lambeth Conference 1998 entitled “The unity of the Anglican Communion,” reiterating the commitment of ten years prior to receiving the ordination of women to the episcopate, notably spoke of “the overall unity of the Anglican Communion.”³⁷ And it quoted an admission of the report of the first commission chaired by Archbishop Eames of Ireland, namely, that “although some of the means by which communion is expressed may be strained or broken, there is a need for courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect, and prayer for one another, and we confirm that our desire to know or be with one another, remains binding on us as Christians.”³⁸ Here, again, the Lambeth Conference took up the tools of ecumenical theology to address the strains, and even “breaks,” between Anglicans by prescribing a return to the basics of charitable inter-Christian encounter.
34. A recent discussion produced by the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England proposed three types or degrees of disagreement, that vary from minor skirmishes within a given church to finally doubting whether one’s opponent is an authentic Christian in any sense.³⁹ These questions are as old as St. Paul’s letters, where we find a similar pattern of struggling to discern the nature and extent of varying conflicts. How, as we have said ecumenically and in Anglican discussions, can we specify the limits of diversity? When does legitimate variation become undue, incoherent, non-scriptural, or otherwise unsanctioned license? The only plausible answer is the traditional one: Church authorities, in the guise of councils, synods, and canons, seek to discern the truth of God in these matters, and then shape an order that may, by God’s grace, articulate and amplify the one faith.⁴⁰ This process takes time and demands patience, on the way to seeking and then preserving the communion of the one Church. We shall have more to say about this when we come to St. Augustine’s school of catechesis in ecclesial charity in his encounters with the Donatists.

³⁵ *Windsor Report* §69: “the doctrine of reception only makes sense if the proposals concern matters on which the Church has not so far made up its mind.”

³⁶ LC 2022, *Lambeth Call: Human Dignity*, §2.3.

³⁷ LC 1998, resolution III.2, emphasis added.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, resolution III.2(e).

³⁹ General Synod, *Communion and Disagreement: A Report from the Faith and Order Commission* (2016), §53ff.; available online. Cf. the report to the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church (2022) by the Task Force on Communion across Difference: “*Put Out into the Deep Water*”: *Communion across Difference as a Christian Call*, 4-6 and 15-19, available online.

⁴⁰ See International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD), *The Church of the Triune God* (2006), VIII.9-12 (available online) for a discussion of “discernment of heresy” in and by the Church, which is “closely linked with the ongoing process of reception, in which innovations, proposed for the sake of actualising the Gospel, are first discerned, and then welcomed or rejected” (VIII.10). Such discernment “properly begins” at the local level, at times requires regional councils or synods, and ultimately redounds to an Ecumenical Council, “whose decisions are received by the whole Church” (VIII.11). Cf. the whole of section IX in *ibid.*: “Reception in Communion.”

Making room for each other

35. Because the Church is a living organism, the constituent dimensions of communion continually need specifying and refining. A 2013 text of the World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, suggests that *full communion* ought properly to include five elements: “communion in the fullness of apostolic faith; in sacramental life; in a truly one and mutually recognised ministry; in structures of conciliar relations and decision-making; and in common witness and service in the world.”⁴¹ By any measure, this presents a tall order.

36. It also fits with what Anglicans have said in recent decades on this same question. The 1990 agreed statement *Church as Communion*, published by the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), enumerated “what constitutes ecclesial communion” in the following, much-quoted paragraph:

It is rooted in the confession of the one apostolic faith, revealed in the Scriptures and set forth in the Creeds. It is founded upon one baptism. The one celebration of the eucharist is its pre-eminent expression and focus. It necessarily finds expression in shared commitment to the mission entrusted by Christ to his Church. It is a life of shared concern for one another in mutual forbearance, submission, gentleness and love; in the placing of the interests of others above the interests of self; in making room for each other in the body of Christ; in solidarity with the poor and the powerless; and in the sharing of gifts both material and spiritual (cf. Acts 2:44). Also constitutive of life in communion is acceptance of the same basic moral values, the sharing of the same vision of humanity created in the image of God and recreated in Christ and the common confession of the one hope in the final consummation of the Kingdom of God.⁴²

37. Again, to view the ecumenical communion of churches through the lens of such lists is not to say that if any of these constituents are lacking or otherwise less than what they should or might be that there is no communion at all: quite the opposite. Nor does the fact of impaired, imperfect, and incomplete communion within a given family of churches, such as the Anglican Communion, render the character of the communion wholly ecumenical, without remainder. The present paper will continually return to all that Anglicans still share — or, as the case may be, can take up again at any time: not only a common baptism, a common liturgical heritage, and a common missionary history, but also an expectant hope that the Eucharist will be celebrated when we meet; not only similar structures and legal frameworks but also Instruments of Communion for mutual discerning and decision-making. We presume, and pray, that all Anglicans will prioritise seeking fullness of faith and order first of all with one another.⁴³

38. As they do so, “bearing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:2), Anglicans will need to “make room for each other in the body of Christ,” in ARCIC’s helpful metaphor. They should “wait for one another” (1 Cor 11:33) and wait for God’s sure guidance of the Church in the “Spirit of truth,” who “convicts” of sin (John 16:8,13). As the Holy Spirit helps us to see one another as flawed pilgrims on the journey who form an *overall* collective of the rebellious, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), the same Spirit will cultivate in us a patience and gentle humility, from which rich soil truthful and loving speech can grow:

⁴¹ World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (2013), §37; available online.

⁴² ARCIC, *Church as Communion* (1990), §45, available online. Cf. analogously *Windsor Report*, §49; Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), *The Virginia Report* (1997), §3.1, available online; Primates’ Task Group, “The Gift, Call and Challenge of Communion,” §7.

⁴³ See Primates’ Task Group, “The Gift, Call and Challenge of Communion,” *passim*. For a traditional presentation of discernment in conscience about eucharistic communion, see LC 1968, resolution 46.

speech that is honest and may be heard and received by those for whom we care (Eph. 4:2,15). Ecclesial discipline, applied to those “inside the Church” (1 Cor. 5:12), must bear this truth-in-love character. In this way, also, as St. Paul insists, even “divisions” within the Church — differentiation, by another name — can be a means of discovering anew the power of God, in the transfiguring weakness of the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 11:19; cf. 1 Cor. 1), on the way to renewed consensus in the truth (1 Cor. 12).

39. Both receiving and working toward the highest degree of communion possible, the next season of Anglican life should focus on perseverance amid disagreement about important questions of orthodoxy and ethics, on the way to a commonly discerned holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the one Church of Christ.

(2) The Holiness of the Church

Holy and blameless

40. To hear the call of communion with Jesus and his Church is to hear the call to holiness or sanctity. Holiness names that quality of life in the Spirit, set apart for the worship of God, that exhibits the beauty and purity of Christ, in whom “all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell,” through whom the Father “reconciles to himself all things” (Col. 1:19-20). In him, having been presented as “holy and blameless and irreproachable” by God’s grace (1:22), the faithful are called and enabled to do “all such good works” as God prepares for them, in the families, communities, and cultures in which they live. And they are to seek agreement, one with another, “in the truth of [God’s] holy Word,” and so “live in unity, and godly love.”⁴⁴

Anglican divisions

41. In view of this call to holy unity, sustained Anglican disputes and divisions concerning marriage and sexuality are disconcerting, and have been a cause for scandal. Many believe that to celebrate and bless the relationships of non-celibate same-sex couples in the Church is to bless what Scripture and the tradition of Christian teaching has always called sin. In this case, such blessing marks a departure from the proper and holy ordering of sex and sexuality. As the union of a man and a woman, holy matrimony is a sign of the nuptial relationship between Christ and the Church and is a union of the two distinct parts of created humanity which has the potential to bring new life into the world and sustain the human race. Marriage therefore also recalls Christ the Word’s sanctifying of created matter in the events of his Incarnation and Passion.
42. For others, the refusal of the Church to bless committed same-sex relationships perpetrates an unholy offence against the love of Christ and a rejection of persons made in God’s image, whose natural affections are understood to be innate rather than chosen. The sin described here is against charity, the more when committed same-sex relationships reflect some of the goods of marriage, such as faithfulness in mutual support, companionship, and the nurturing, if not begetting, of children. Moreover, for many within the Communion, the criminalisation of homosexual acts, including punishment by imposition of the death penalty, supported by Anglicans in some countries, amounts to a sinful refusal of Christ’s justice.

⁴⁴ “The Order for the Administration of The Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion,” Book of Common Prayer (1662), available online.

43. These two accounts are not entirely contradictory. Anglicans disagree, however, about what constitutes the holy life, including questions about the proper place of celibacy as an expectation for single persons, expectations for the moral life of the ordained, and public liturgies of blessing of same-sex relationships. Is there some reliable way of resolving this? Again, the councils and synods of the Church are given by God for the shared discerning of truth, centred on the Scriptures, on the way to achieving agreement or “one mind,” as the New Testament exhorts (Phil. 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 3:8; cf. Acts 15). If divisions should be expected here as well, these will be resolved in the just judgment of the Lord, when all is revealed (1 Cor. 11:19,32).

Walking together at a distance

44. This is no counsel of despair. As a foretaste of the promises of God, and by his grace, Church-dividing disputes have sometimes been overcome, aided by patient dialogue and theological research. The hard-won achievements of the multi-ecclesial landmark *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999, 2019), for instance, or the Anglican–Oriental Orthodox statements on Christology and the Holy Spirit, demonstrate that long-enduring disputes can be overcome.⁴⁵ As Pope John Paul II argued, ecumenical encounter should be a “dialogue of conversion” that becomes a “dialogue of salvation,” since it is founded in Jesus Christ the Redeemer and Lord, who is our reconciliation.⁴⁶ As the pope continued:

This vertical aspect of dialogue lies in our acknowledgment, jointly and to each other, that we are men and women who have sinned. It is precisely this acknowledgment which creates in brothers and sisters living in communities not in full communion with one another that interior space where Christ, the source of the Church’s unity, can effectively act, with all the power of his Spirit, the Paraclete.⁴⁷

45. When Anglicans, like others, differ profoundly about aspects of holy living, they can recommit themselves to finding holy ways of handling differences and divisions. What might it look like to be “completely” humble, gentle, and patient, “bearing with one another in love”? How might we “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2-3)? Refusing to give up on those with whom we differ means pressing into renewed love when the world would have us walk away. A dogged refusal to give up on each other, to remain in relationship despite deep and significant disagreement, can be a remarkable witness to the power of Christ to bring unity in a divided world, and a foretaste of the day when all things in heaven and on earth will be brought together under Christ (Eph. 1:10). Such persistent accompanying need not always entail walking abreast, or at the same speed, or necessarily always on the same path. Solemn calls to unity may sometimes function as an abuse of power, as they seek to enforce a closeness of relationship that would suppress or deny important differences. We find in the story of Paul and Barnabas a precedent for walking together at a distance, so to speak, as they parted company after a “sharp disagreement” (Acts 15:39) and yet remained apostolic colleagues in mission, with some measure of mutual respect and even fondness (see 1 Cor. 9:5; 2 Tim. 4:11; Col. 4:10). Just here, a perhaps surprising aspect of the *bond of peace* is revealed as differentiated blessing.

⁴⁵ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, 20th Anniversary Edn.; Anglican–Oriental Orthodox International Commission, *Christology* (2002, 2014) and *Procession and Work of the Holy Spirit* (2017). All are available online.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism* (1995), §35; available online.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

46. All Christians meet as undeserving disciples who have been welcomed as friends into the communion of God's Son, by his Spirit. Within the soil of his sacrifice, we are buried as seeds, that may, in time, "sprout and grow," we know not how (Mark 4:27). None of this is easy, as the history of the Church and its divisions makes clear, but neither is it optional. It is the divinely appointed pattern and takes time. As Jesus describes the kingdom of God: "the earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once [the sower] goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come" (4:28-29).
47. When God transforms us into the image of his Son, who is the truth, *he* clothes us with our new selves, re-created "according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness," as the letter to the Ephesians says (Eph. 4:24). This is what "speaking the truth in love" looks like: "we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ," who enables the building up of the body in love, "when each part is working properly" (4:15-16). As we learn to speak truthfully to one another in Christ, he enables us to speak honestly, and to face hard matters. As families that love each other engage constructively in conflict, in a spirit of self-giving aimed at reconciliation (see Eph. 5), we should expect some degree of discomfort.
48. Those who, in our debates, call themselves *conservative* or *orthodox* should recognise the gift and call of accountability to those with whom they share a common baptism, history, and other means of communion, even when they believe them to be in serious doctrinal error and moral jeopardy. Those who call themselves *progressive* or *liberal* should be prepared to grant graciously the degree of seriousness with which their fellow Anglicans take the matters at hand and concede the consequence of some degree of diminished communion. And all should be prepared to serve and honour the other, even when distance or differentiation may be needed, as an implication of our commitment to making room for each other. In this way, Anglican churches can continue — in the company of other Christians, to whom we are also bound in love (Col. 3:14) — to engage in the search for truth together.

(3) The Catholicity of the Church

Catholic orthodoxy

49. Catholicity denotes the visible breadth and structural recognisability of the one Church across time and place. Acts 9:31 reports that "the Church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers." The Greek phrase translated as *throughout* is *καθ' ὅλης*: catholic. St. Luke presents a picture of the Church located and expressed in different places and cultural contexts, yet united in faith. In the 5th-century formulation of St. Vincent of Lérins, that which is *catholic* "has been believed everywhere, always and by all people." This presumes the need for the Church perpetually to discern and articulate the orthodox faith, while preserving proper diversity, according to which the different members play complementary roles (1 Cor. 12:21). Imagining together what this will look like, Anglicans and Lutherans, for example, have agreed that "diverse traditions of theological method and of spirituality and liturgy" can be understood as "a desirable dimension of the catholicity of the Church where judged to be genuine expressions of a faith held in common."⁴⁸ Again, the implication of shared counsel and decision-making is a constitutive ingredient of communion.

⁴⁸ *Growth in Communion: Report for the Anglican–Lutheran International Working Group 2000-2002*, §138; available online. The report distinguishes "(a) legitimate diversity on secondary or non-essential matters, b) bearable anomalies, c) potentially church-dividing issues" (§136; cf. §§145, 149, 151ff.). Cf. Norman Doe,

50. With reference to seeking and serving the Church's catholicity amid doctrinal dispute, we find two broad patterns in Anglican ecclesiology. One, evidenced in the Church of England's departure from the Church of Rome, calls for a clean break from what is taken to be heresy or deliberate moral sinfulness within the Church. The other, illustrated in the Elizabethan Settlement, sets the inevitability of doctrinal dispute within the broad contours of a visible Church, which serves as a staging ground for God's just judgment and right ordering in the end. Bishop John Jewel's polemical justification of the Church of England's split from Rome gives way to Richard Hooker's synthesis a generation later, which labours to affirm the authentic ecclesiality of even the Church of Rome, notwithstanding serious doctrinal disagreement.⁴⁹
51. As Hooker writes, Christians in the Church of England certainly *hope* "that to reform ourselves, if at any time we have done amiss, is not to sever ourselves from the Church we were of before. In the Church we were, and we are so still." But this must be true of others, as well — not only the Lutherans, for instance, but also the Church of Rome, with which the Church of England can still seek to "hold fellowship," insofar as it "lawfully may." Thus, just as St. Paul can speak of Israel as both the enemy and the beloved of God (Rom. 11:28), so too with Rome, says Hooker: we "dare not" commune with "her gross and grievous abominations," and "yet touching those main parts of Christian truth" in which Roman Catholics "constantly still persist, we gladly acknowledge them to be of the family of Jesus Christ." Accordingly, "our hearty prayer unto God Almighty is, that being conjoined so far forth with them, they may at the length (if it be his will) so yield to frame and reform themselves, that no distraction remain in any thing, but that we 'all may with one heart and one mouth glorify God the Father of our Lord and Saviour' (Rom. 15:6), whose Church we are."⁵⁰
52. In this, Hooker aligns his thinking with St. Augustine of Hippo's arguments with the Donatists in the 4th and 5th centuries.⁵¹ For Augustine, the Donatist error was to break from

"Communion and Autonomy in Anglicanism: Nature and Maintenance" (n.d., available online), a paper prepared for the Lambeth Commission, which produced the *Windsor Report* of 2004. Cf. IATDC, *Virginia Report*, §5.14-5.15 (citing ARCIC's *Final Report*, Authority I, §21). Cf. IARCCUM sub-commission, "Ecclesiological Reflections," §28; ICAOTD, *Church of the Triune God*, IX.24-25.

⁴⁹ See John Jewel, *The Apology of the Church of England* (1564, available online), *passim*, including from part IV: "As touching that we have now done to depart from that Church, whose errors were proved and made manifest to the world, which Church also had already evidently departed from God's word: and yet not to depart so much from itself, as from the errors thereof." We have, writes Jewel, "put ourselves apart not as heretics are wont, from the Church of Christ, but as all good men ought to do, from the infection of naughty persons and hypocrites" — and more than that, from the "fellowship" of "men, who, though they be not, yet at least seem and be called Christians." To be sure, these same imposters, having "left nothing remaining in the Church of God that hath any likeness of this Church, yet will... seem the patrons and valiant maintainers of the Church," as all heretics always have. Here Jewel notes Arians, Nestorians, Ebionites, and "Mahomites" (or "Saracens"); in an earlier list he includes the Eutychians, Marcionites, Valentinians, Carpocratians, Tatians, and Novatians — in short, "all them which have had a wicked opinion either of God the Father, or of Christ, or of the Holy Ghost, or of any other point of the Christian religion" (part III). Curiously, in both lists of heresies, Jewel fails to mention Donatists, the *ecclesial* heretics, whose teaching and actions occasioned St. Augustine's having insisted that the true Church sits secretly within the all-too-visible bounds of a mixed assembly, attended by good and bad Catholic alike.

⁵⁰ All from Richard Hooker, *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594), III.i.10, available online.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, III.i.9.

the Church in search of a haven of purity, rather than contesting for the orthodox faith *within* the Church, which is always a mixture of wheat and weeds (see Matt. 13:24-43).⁵² To be sure, Augustine expended considerable energy answering and correcting the views of fellow Catholics. Such intra-ecclesial contestation forms the faithful in a requisite “patience” and “prudence,” and aids the advance of those in need of correction, enabling “many of their number” to be “converted to the doing of the good pleasure of God with a great impetus, when led to take pity upon their own souls.”⁵³ Instruction, therefore, “in a spirit of gentleness,” giving “careful study to the rule of faith” in a bid to accept “the authority of what is catholic,” is the order of the day.⁵⁴

53. This 4th and 5th century debate set the classic terms in the West for contending with heresy and schism and articulating the orthodox faith. It begins from a universal recognition of Christian baptism as valid and non-repeatable, irrespective of ecclesial location. Next, it notes the inevitability of heresy both within and without the Church, and its schismatic consequences as a separation from the truth, depicted consistently in both Old and New Testaments.⁵⁵ Lastly, it elaborates an account of interior conversion, faithfulness, and perseverance — for individual souls and for the Church herself — as gifts of grace hidden from view but assured all the same. In this way, God protects and preserves the Church, guides her bishops, and forms the faithful in hope and love, as they await the day when all will be put right.⁵⁶

Differentiated communion

54. In this Augustinian tradition, now appropriated in an ecumenical key, all Christians can affirm that the Church has suffered some degree of fragmentation or wounding.⁵⁷ Amid arguments about theology and practice, it is easy to found new communities ranged over against one another. This denominationalizing of the Church presents a counter-witness to the gospel, seemingly surrendering any hope of “unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). At the same time, the Church survives and thrives according to God’s promises (Matt. 16:18), not only amid persecutions, but also as countless communities manage, by God’s grace, to share the good news, meet challenges, and discover new resources. The rich diversity of churches and traditions, notwithstanding the sin of division, bears witness

⁵² Augustine of Hippo, *De doctrina christiana*, III.37, 55, available online.

⁵³ Augustine of Hippo, *De catechizandis rudibus*, 25,48, available online.

⁵⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *On Baptism*, 5.27.38, available online (and trans. in *The Donatist Controversy I*, ed. Boniface Ramsey and David G. Hunter [New City Press, 2019]).

⁵⁵ See Hooker, *Lawes*, III.i.7: “We speak now of the visible Church, whose children are signed with this mark, ‘One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.’ In whomsoever these things are, the Church doth acknowledge them for her children.... For apparent it is, that all men are of necessity either Christians or not Christians. If by external profession they be Christians, then are they of the visible Church of Christ: and Christians by external profession they be all, whose mark of recognizance hath in it those things which we have mentioned, yea, although they be impious idolaters, wicked heretics, persons excommunicable, yea, and cast out for notorious improbity.” Cf. III.i.9: “God hath had ever and ever shall have some [such] Church visible upon earth,” at the outset of his survey of God’s covenantal faithfulness to the “people of God” of the Old Testament, under the same sign of a mixed body. Cf. III.i.10: “The Church of Christ which was from the beginning is and continueth unto the end: of which Church all parts have not been always equally sincere and sound.”

⁵⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *On Baptism*, 5.18.24–5.28.39 *et passim*.

⁵⁷ See Lambeth Conference 1920, *Encyclical Letter*. Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §48.3; *Decree on Ecumenism*, §4.10: “the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all her bearings”; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §817, available online. Cf. ICAOTD, *Church of the Triune God*, VIII.13; IASCUFO, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §5.5.3; ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way*, §§21, 80; IRAD, *Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling*, §§39, 49, 51.

variously to aspects of the catholic faith, each authentic piece of which is needed, as it is given by God “for the redemption of the world.”⁵⁸

55. In time, by God’s grace, the sharp disagreements of Christians and churches can find resolution in a renewed, visible, catholic consensus. Anglicans have long worked and prayed for this, and they should continue to do so. Such consensus cannot be found without “contending for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3), through which the Lord enables the Church to find her voice and speak truthfully. On both counts, again, persistent difference, disagreement, and even division can be contained by the Church, and by communions within her, in a key of patient love, recognising the gift of correction as a chastening by the Lord, “so that we may not be condemned” (1 Cor. 11:32).
56. The Covenantal Structure of the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches, for instance, may be viewed in this light as a helpful contribution to the discernment of doctrinal and ethical truth within the Anglican Communion. The GSFA has said repeatedly that it hopes to see the Communion articulate afresh with vigour the catholic and apostolic faith and order of the Church as a renewal of her mission, and that it has no plans to depart from the Anglican Communion. In a family of churches increasingly aware of its diversification and eager to recover a fullness of communion one with another, contributions from such fellowships and networks should be expected. They stand as outworkings both of provincial autonomy and the mutuality of “common counsel,” in hopeful service of the unity and faithfulness of the Anglican Communion.⁵⁹
57. We can recall here the Anglican commitment to a historic episcopate “locally adapted” (Lambeth Quadrilateral) and the ecumenical principle of degrees of communion, both of which complement a proper catholicity. Taking up these points, a recent programmatic proposal from a task force of The Episcopal Church (in the United States) argued for renewed attention to “the exercise, role, and range of episcopal ministry, since the ministry of bishops necessarily incorporates local, regional, and worldwide aspects. In a world that seeks to overcome disagreement through enforced uniformities,” the report continued, “differentiated communion in an episcopal key may contribute a much-needed leaven of principled diversity, set within provisional structures that model humility.”⁶⁰ The structures that have developed in the Communion are contingent and provisional: penultimate not ultimate. More recently proposed reforms, such as the Anglican Communion Covenant, perhaps failed to win sufficient consensus because they sought to suppress division rather than accept its inevitability. Looking to the next season of Anglican life together, the Communion will do well to renew this conversation, as we wait for the promised, eschatological completion of the Church.

⁵⁸ Exhortation, in “The Order for the Administration of The Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion,” Book of Common Prayer (1662). Cf. LC 1920, *Encyclical Letter*: “In the past, negotiations for reunion have often started with the attempt to define the measure of uniformity which is essential. The impression has been given that nothing else matters. Now we see that those elements of truth about which differences have arisen are essential to the fulness of the witness of the whole Church.” Cf. Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism*, §23.

⁵⁹ LC 1930, resolution 49.

⁶⁰ Task Force on Communion across Difference, “*Put Out into the Deep Water*,” 17. A second task force carried the work forward in a report to the 81st General Convention (2024), in a series of proposed “necessary elements of a just and sustainable path toward continued fellowship,” including “a system of partnerships between dioceses” to protect conscientious differences about marriage (available online at generalconvention.org). Most of the task force’s proposals were adopted at the 81st General Convention. Cf. ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way*, §95.

(4) The Apostolicity of the Church

Apostolic foundation

58. The apostolic nature of the Church traditionally points to two things: the continuity of her faith with that of the apostles, and her sending (*apostello*) into the world in the mission of God. On both counts, renewed attention to the structures of the Anglican Communion may be approached in practical ways, the better to help churches sustain interdependent life and bear witness to the hope of the gospel in a world caught in perpetual cycles of ethnic and political strife.
59. The churches of the Anglican Communion share a history of common prayer and common mission, nourished by a rich theological inheritance. Incorporating the earliest arrival of Christianity in Britain, Pope Gregory the Great's sending of St. Augustine to the Angles in the 6th century, and the reformation of the Church of England in the 16th century, what we now call the Anglican Communion emerged gradually from the fruit of 18th, 19th, and 20th century missions. As set forth above, the blossoming Communion laid claim to the liturgical and doctrinal pattern of the Church of England, enshrined in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, the 39 Articles, the Ordinal, and the Homilies. Anglican churches assumed an ancient pattern of apostolicity, according to which the ministry of bishops symbolised and enacted the personal, collegial, and communal centre of faith and order, set within local and trans-local synods.⁶¹ In the influential Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral commitment of 1886 and 1888, Anglican bishops agreed that the Scriptures, creeds, dominical sacraments, and a locally adapted historic episcopate might provide sufficient grounds for communion with, and even reunion between, all Christians and churches.

Structural variability of the Anglican Communion

60. At the same time, as we have seen, Anglicans have frequently professed a principled provisionality; what Archbishop Ramsey called our "incompleteness," apart from the larger Whole.⁶² This sense of provisionality led the Anglican Communion, in its affirmation of the Chicago Quadrilateral, to embrace an ethos of ecumenical openness — not concerning the faith and order of the Church, but with respect to incidental aspects of her structure and culture, all of which were held lightly, in service of a larger, universal end. In the original presentation of the Quadrilateral in 1886, the bishops "solemnly declared" a readiness "in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences" of their own, concerning "things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs."⁶³ The thought is an old one, harkening back to Article 34 (of the 39 Articles).⁶⁴ And the addition of "locally adapted in the methods of its administration" to the fourth corner of the Quadrilateral follows from this same spirit, suggesting a proper

⁶¹ See IATDC, *Virginia Report*, §5.5-5.16.

⁶² The "incompleteness" of the Anglican Church points "through its own history to something of which it is a fragment.... For it is sent not to commend itself as 'the best type of Christianity,' but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died'" (Michael Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, cited by IASCUFO, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §5.5.4). Cf. IATDC, *Communion, Conflict and Hope: The Kuala Lumpur Report of the Third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission* (London: ACC, 2008), §48.

⁶³ "Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral."

⁶⁴ Article 34: Of the Traditions of the Church (available online): "It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word."

variability in the structural organising and governance of the Church, as an outworking of *episcopé*.⁶⁵

61. Anglicans have found this to be true in the organising of their Instruments of Communion, as the precedent of numerous reforms, adjustments, additions, and subtractions since at least Lambeth Conference 1897 bear witness.⁶⁶ Besides the very creation of the ACC and Primates' Meetings (themselves long anticipated, and tried in several forms⁶⁷), we can note more recently the stream of suggestions mooted by the Lambeth Conferences of 1988, 1998, and 2022,⁶⁸ in addition to those of the Anglican Covenant and successive ecumenical reports. Many have not been accepted. But each built upon the ones before, in the hope of advancing the collective discernment of the Communion about how best to gather and equip the member churches in unity and mission. Such gathering and equipping must, in the nature of the case, shift and vary to accommodate the needs and contexts of the churches at different times and in different places.
62. For this reason, the last four Archbishops of Canterbury have supported initiatives to develop the Communion's structures, both to uphold Anglican apostolicity in faith and mission and to enable and encourage continuing conversation about difficult matters.⁶⁹ Again, each has built upon the other, seeking to care for the whole Anglican family while at the same time fulfilling a formal obligation to the Church of England. Their labours have been, in many ways, both visionary and valiant. In the face of dissensus and paralysis, the archbishops have repeatedly called Anglican churches to the highest degree of communion possible; and they have sought, with the other Instruments, to accommodate what the Lambeth Conference of 1920 could already call the "shifting centre of gravity" of the Communion.⁷⁰
63. Especially in the wake of the 1963 Toronto Congress, successive commissions, conferences, and statements have also sought to assess and overcome the consequences of colonialism, which shaped the history of many, though not all, member churches.⁷¹ In service of this goal, the ACC has gathered and given voice to the autonomous churches of the Communion, which are no longer arranged around the Church of England (as in 1930) like spokes leading to the centre of a wheel. The Primates' Meeting, for its part, has provided both a critical complement to the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury and a bridge for the reception

⁶⁵ One of the achievements of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, the landmark of multilateral consensus, was its retrieval of an originary episcopal ministry that may take various forms according to the needs of local churches. Cf. ICAOTD, *Church of the Triune God*, V.13, 26.

⁶⁶ LC 1897, resolution 5, establishing the first ancestor of the ACC: "it is advisable that a consultative body should be formed to which resort may be had, if desired, by the national Churches, provinces, and extra-provincial dioceses of the Anglican Communion either for information or for advice, and that the Archbishop of Canterbury be requested to take such steps as he may think most desirable for the creation of this consultative body."

⁶⁷ See Colin Podmore, "The Governance of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion" (Church of England, GS Misc 910; 2009), available online.

⁶⁸ LC 1988, resolution 18; LC 1998, resolution III.8; LC 2022, *Lambeth Call: Anglican Identity*, §§3.1-3.3.

⁶⁹ Archbishop Runcie, "Opening Address to the Lambeth Conference" (1988); IATDC, *The Virginia Report*, presented by Archbishop Carey at LC 1998; three presidential addresses by Archbishop Williams at LC 2008 in support of the Anglican Communion Covenant; Archbishop Welby, Presidential Address at ACC-18 (Feb. 2023), calling for a review of the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury. As Welby said, "The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the See of Canterbury, is an historic one. The Instruments must change with the times." All are available online.

⁷⁰ See again LC 1920, "Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider Relation to and Reunion with Other Churches."

⁷¹ To cite just one report, replete with references to a wider literature and debate: Inter-Anglian Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism, *Travelling together in God's Mission* (2001-2005), available online.

of resolutions of the Lambeth Conference by the churches of the Communion. A continued *focus* on the See of Canterbury seems misguided here, if it means looking to the Archbishop of Canterbury as a hoped-for court of appeal or singular spokesperson amid conflict and disagreement. The *Virginia* and *Windsor* reports, and Anglican Covenant, proposed an enhanced role for the Archbishop of Canterbury. The suggestion had little historical grounding, however, and has not been received.⁷² The Archbishop of Canterbury does not have the formal power to play such a role, which would contravene the equality and mutuality of the 42 member churches of the Communion. He (or she), moreover, will always be the primate of one particular church with its own polity and doctrine, which may or may not be shared fully by all other churches of the Communion.

Free association in communion

64. Alongside the evolution of the Instruments of Communion, a range of relationships of full communion have developed between one or more Anglican churches and churches outside the Communion. In various ways, formal links have been established to embody the recognition of deep mutual sharing in the gospel and in matters of faith and order. By requiring broader reflection on how such relationships are enunciated and conducted, they have enriched our understandings within the Communion. One practical consequence is that, for almost a century, it has been clearly understood that to be in Communion with the See of Canterbury does not automatically bring membership of the Anglican Communion.
65. As early as 1931, the Anglican Communion entered into a relationship of full communion with the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht through the Bonn Agreement. Similar agreements were reached with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (the Philippine Independent Church) in 1961, and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar. While there is no expectation that any of these would ever become members of the Anglican Communion, there has been recognition, particularly in Europe, that resulting parallel geographical jurisdictions present a challenge that the churches should reflect upon.⁷³
66. Different expressions of full communion across ecclesial traditions followed from the establishment of the United Churches of South and North India (1947, 1970), Pakistan (1970), and Bangladesh (1974), in which Anglicans were included. These are full members of the Christian World Communions of all their founding churches. Participation in any one is not seen as inevitably detracting from or undermining participation in another, though challenges may arise, as were experienced around the Anglican Covenant. The breadth of

⁷² *Windsor Report*, §109: “As the significant focus of unity, mission and teaching, the Communion looks to the office of the Archbishop to articulate the mind of the Communion especially in areas of controversy” (emphasis in original). On the Archbishop of Canterbury as would-be “focus” of unity more generally, see *Virginia Report*, §§3.30-3.35; *Windsor Report*, §99; Anglican Covenant, §3.1.4. Cf. IASCUFO, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §3.2.6. For a history that demonstrates the experimental character of these recent suggestions, along with discussions of the phrases “primacy of honour” and “primus inter pares,” see Ross, *A Still More Excellent Way*, 12, 111-21 *et passim*. Cf. Andrew Atherstone, “In Communion with the See of Canterbury?” *The Global Anglican*, 138/1 (2024): 13-25. The Windsor Continuation Group, in its “Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury,” observed that “all primates are the first amongst the bishops of their churches; together they can articulate the common counsel of the Churches of the Communion, informing and guiding discernment” (§63). More broadly, *The Windsor Report* noted that “the ministry of bishops as chief pastors and teachers of the faith, as the focus of unity and source of ministry,” became a hallmark of early Anglican ecclesiology (§63, emphasis added).

⁷³ ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way*, notes that, while “the Lambeth Conference has eschewed parallel jurisdictions,” they may be found in the Catholic Church “in a structured way.” This precedent could offer an “ecclesial model” for others, but only, the Commission cautions, “on the premise of full communion between them” (§98).

perspectives, experiences, and relationships of these churches has often relieved Anglicans from a tendency to undue introspection regarding issues before us.

67. More recently, deepening ties between Anglicans and Lutherans have led to regional relationships of full communion, through the Porvoo Declaration (Europe, 1996), *Called to Common Mission* (USA, 2000), and *Called to Full Communion: The Waterloo Declaration* (Canada, 2001). The Episcopal Church and the Church of Sweden established a full communion relationship in 2023. Each of the agreements sets out the varying terms of the relationships, which do not automatically extend to Anglicans or Lutherans in other parts of the world. There is implicit recognition that these are steps on a necessarily longer, and broader, journey in obedience to the call to full visible unity of the whole Church of God.
68. Some of these relationships have drawn energy from shared concerns; for example, common mission and social justice have featured prominently in some Anglican–Lutheran contexts. For others, questions of faith and order have led the way. Similarly, the Anglican Communion’s own networks have drawn together member churches with common interests and priorities, from the environment to indigenous peoples, peace and justice, youth, liturgy, and so on. Regional groupings such as the Council of Provinces of Africa (CAPA) and the Council of Churches of East Asia (CCEA) have demonstrated the fruitfulness of close association. The GSFA spans these two models in its development of a doctrinally focused structure offered both to churches of the Anglican Communion and to others. In every case, neither centered in nor organised by Canterbury, these groups sustain their own initiatives and enrich the sharing of the sister churches of the Anglican Communion.
69. Sharing our joys and sorrows, and extending mutual commitments where we can, is a sign and foretaste of maturing, interdependent communion that reflects a normative New Testament pattern. This may be seen as one way of expressing the reality we acknowledge of the ultimate insufficiency of Anglicanism. Recent missiological research has emphasized the polycentric nature of Christian life and mission from the beginning — dispersed between Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, and Jerusalem, and never simply centralized.⁷⁴ Although the Church began in Jerusalem, St. Paul encourages bonds of affection between the churches of Asia and Macedonia (Acts 16:9), as well as sending support from newer churches back to the struggling Church of Jerusalem, rather than the reverse (2 Cor. 9). The uncoerced emergence of relationships, including of full communion, which embrace both some members of the Anglican Communion and other ecclesial bodies — from, for example, Lutherans in the Porvoo Agreement, or GSFA partners, to GAFCON — has potential to enrich both Communion life and promote stronger links throughout global Christianity, whether those associations derive from doctrinal, missional, or geographical factors.
70. While there is no expectation that any with whom relationships of full communion are established should become members of the Anglican Communion, it may be that some might desire this. At present, New Member Churches are recognised by a process set forth in Article 7.2 of the ACC Constitution, which reads as follows:

The Member-Churches of the Council shall be those bodies listed in the Schedule to these Articles each of which shall be entitled to send the specified number of Members to the Plenary Sessions of the Council mentioned in Article 16 below; with the assent of two-thirds of the Primates of the Anglican Communion (which shall be deemed to have been received if not

⁷⁴ See, for example, Allen Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology: 21st Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere* (IVP Academic, 2016).

withheld in writing within four months from the date of notification) the Standing Committee may alter or add to the Schedule.⁷⁵

71. Questions may also arise about attendance at, and participation in, meetings of Instruments of the Communion by ecclesial bodies in full communion with one or several member churches, but not listed on the schedule of the ACC. Bishops of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht are invited as full participants in the Lambeth conference, for example. The Archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America was invited to join a gathering of the primates in 2016. What principles might apply? IASCUFO plans to contribute further research on this important question, drawing on both Anglican and ecumenical sources.

⁷⁵ Articles of Association of The Anglican Consultative Council (2006; hereafter ACC Constitution), Article 7.2; available online at anglicancommunion.org.

IV. Principal Proposals of This Paper

72. Within the context of all that we have considered and explored, IASCUFO now offers the following specific proposals for the consideration of the Instruments of Communion, particularly in advance of ACC-19 in 2026. We are grateful for the thoughtful engagement of the Primates' Meeting of April 2024, and of the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council, which provided further momentum and focus for our work. The proposals suggest modest but potentially far-reaching shifts in the conceptualization and organization of the Anglican Communion and its Instruments, both to take account of changes in the last century and to encourage a maximal sharing in leadership that reflects our identity and ideals.

First Proposal: Revised description of the Communion

73. **We invite the Instruments of Communion to adopt as a resolution a revised description of the Anglican Communion.** The Primates' Meeting of April 2024 agreed that "an updated description will be helpful" and indicated an interest in "continuing conversation with IASCUFO about its proposed recasting of the 1930 statement, in advance of the next meeting of the ACC."⁷⁶ IASCUFO subsequently continued the conversation with the Primates' Standing Committee, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the whole of the Standing Committee of the ACC. Together we present below (in §76) a revised description of the Communion.
74. The description of the Anglican Communion adopted by the 1930 Lambeth Conference could not have anticipated the future equality, mutuality, and maturing of the 42 sister churches of the Communion. The phrase "in communion with the see of Canterbury" served, in 1930, as a synonym for "full communion with the Church of England."⁷⁷ At that point in our history, the Church of England still stood as the focal point and touchstone of a rapidly diversifying Communion. Since the founding of the ACC in 1968 and the Primates' Meeting in 1978, the Church of England and its principal See no longer function as the doorway of membership to the Anglican Communion. The Primates' Meeting and ACC, acting in coordinated fashion, fulfil this role, according to the Constitution of the ACC (see §70, above). Moreover, Anglicans now recognise that *fullness* of communion with the Church of England or the See of Canterbury are not requisite for any church of the Communion. Rather, all together seek a highest degree of communion possible, one with another. On all counts, and for several other reasons enumerated below, describing the Communion afresh will help Anglicans think and speak more truly and realistically about what we still share and trust that we are called to.
75. There could be reasons to think that an entirely new description of the Communion would be attractive. Many such descriptions might be offered, attuned to one and another aspect or ideal of Anglican life together. IASCUFO has, however, preferred to suggest a narrow

⁷⁶ Primates' Meeting "Communiqué" (2 May 2024), §12: "In view of the changes to the Instruments of Communion since 1930 and our continuing call to seek full communion one with another, we agree with IASCUFO that an updated description [of the Communion] will be helpful. The Primates' Meeting anticipates a continuing conversation with IASCUFO about its proposed recasting of the 1930 statement, in advance of the next meeting of the ACC."

⁷⁷ See IASCUFO, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §3.4.3: "Through communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglican Churches are *held in communion with the Church of England* and with each other, while those Churches that are in communion with the Anglican Communion are also in communion with the See of Canterbury" (emphasis added). Cf. again LC 1930, resolution 49, in light of the first sentence of the encyclical letter of the same conference (note 7, above).

revision of resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, not only out of respect for its classic status. Its crystallisation of core commitments still resonates with the vocation of the Anglican Communion of churches, as we have listened to the testimony of Scripture and to one another in the intervening century.

76. We present here our revision of the 1930 description of the Anglican Communion for the consideration of ACC-19, followed by brief explanatory comments. An Appendix to this paper annotates all additions and deletions in greater detail.

***(Proposed) Statement of the nature and status of the Anglican Communion,
as that term is used in the Constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council***

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches, which have the following characteristics in common:

- a. they seek to uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their distinct Churches;*
- b. they are autonomous, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a local expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and*
- c. they are bound together through their shared inheritance, mutual service, common counsel (of bishops and others) in conference, and historic connection with the See of Canterbury, by which they seek interdependently to foster the highest degree of communion possible one with another.*

We make this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into full communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.

77. The member churches of the Communion are *duly constituted* at the diocesan, provincial, and regional level as they conform to local structures and canons in an orderly and recognisable fashion, and at the Communion level as they are added to the Schedule of membership, according to the ACC Constitution (Article 7.2: see §70, above). *Communion with the See of Canterbury* no longer frames the description but is incorporated into the list of binding characteristics, below (c), in amended form. As in 1930, the Communion is called a *fellowship within* the Church Catholic. Descriptively and hopefully, the churches of the Communion are said to (a) *seek* to uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order, as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. As ever, (b) they are properly autonomous, rooted in their various localities. And (c) they remain *bound together* in four respects: “through their shared inheritance, mutual service, common counsel in conference, and historic connection with the See of Canterbury.” Cumulatively, these four characteristics capture the present reality and ideals of the churches of the Communion, by which they “seek to foster the highest degree of communion” with one another and with all churches and communities of the Universal Church.

78. Regarding the four binding characteristics listed under letter (c), several things may be noted, which are addressed more fully in the Appendix. First, while traditions rightly vary among

Anglicans, in keeping with Article 34 (see §60, above), Anglican churches *share* a rich *inheritance* of catholic and apostolic faith and order, nourished by common prayer. Second, *mutual service* names a vital characteristic and calling of Christian obedience in love that may be given by all Christians freely without expectation of return, including by those divided from one another for various reasons. Third, while the common counsel *of bishops* remains basic to Anglican ecclesiology in the institutions of both the Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meeting, which bear collegial and communal responsibilities for the faith and order of the Communion, it no longer makes sense to think of *counsel* in the Anglican Communion as exclusively episcopal in view of the Anglican Consultative Council and other inter-Anglican gatherings. Fourth, the *See of Canterbury*, the first see of the Anglican Communion, stands as a symbol of the apostolic character of the Anglican Communion and serves as a touchstone of Anglican unity, for which reason the Archbishop of Canterbury is rightly understood as an Instrument of Communion. The binding character of historic connection to Canterbury that all Anglicans share is experienced in countless contexts and relationships, and especially set within the college of the primates and collective episcopate. We will have more to say about the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury immediately below (in §§79 and 82ff.).

79. With respect to the common practice of excerpting the phrase “in communion with the See of Canterbury” from the 1930 description and taking it as a shorthand summary of Anglican identity, IASCUFO believes this practice can and should no longer be understood as normative. Communion with the See of Canterbury remains salutary, and for this reason can be sought, and may especially be cherished by many churches of the Communion. Constitutions and canons of churches of the Communion are free to specify their own commitment to “communion with the See of Canterbury.” At the same time, such communion ought not be expected in any provincial constitution or canon nor need it be affirmed univocally by all member churches. Some degree of latitude is fitting and appropriate.
80. A new summary phrase that aptly captures Anglican identity may appear in time, perhaps by resolution from one of the instruments.⁷⁸ A single sentence summary of our own updated description of the Communion might run as follows: “*The Anglican Communion is a fellowship of autonomous episcopal churches bound together by their shared inheritance, mutual service, common counsel, historic connection with the See of Canterbury, and commitment to seeking full communion one with another and with the wider Church.*”
81. When ACC-18 asked IASCUFO to proceed with the present project it specified in Resolution 3(a) that “any proposals that may impact the ACC Constitution” be brought for full discussion to ACC-19. The Constitution of the ACC defines its member churches as “in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury.”⁷⁹ IASCUFO is now working with the Standing Committee of the ACC to draft new language for the Constitution, in light of the

⁷⁸ Already at the Lambeth Conference of 1948, the report on the Anglican Communion was reaching for new metaphors. “The Anglican Communion today,” wrote the bishops, “is like a river that is made up of streams, each of which passes through a different country, each with a colour drawn from the soil through which it passes, each giving its best to the full strength of the river, flowing toward that ocean symbolic of a larger comity when the Anglican Communion itself will once again become part of a reunited Christendom.” Accordingly, “the pattern is a series of provinces, each autonomous in its own sphere, and *each in full communion with the Anglican Communion*” (“Report IV: The Anglican Communion” in *The Lambeth Conference 1948: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, together with Resolutions and Reports* [London: SPCK, 1948], part II, p. 83, emphasis added). Cf. IATDC, *Virginia Report*, §§3.30-3.35.

⁷⁹ ACC Constitution, Article 2.1.

foregoing direction of travel. This will be presented in advance of ACC-19. In turn, we hope that the next meeting of the Lambeth Conference will devote sustained attention to the identity and vocation of the Anglican Communion, to advance our shared understanding and deepen our collective commitment.

Second Proposal: Broadened leadership of the Instruments

82. **We invite the Instruments of Communion to consider ways of broadening the means by which their meetings are called, convened, chaired, and presided over.** The Primates' Meeting of April 2024 "welcomed suggestions and further conversation in this regard from IASCUFO and others" and "began to discuss ways of assisting and broadening aspects of the Archbishop of Canterbury's ministry in the Communion, including through the Regional Primates who form the Primates' Standing Committee."⁸⁰ IASCUFO subsequently continued the conversation with the Primates' Standing Committee, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the whole of the Standing Committee of the ACC. Together we present the following suggestions for the consideration of the Instruments, particularly (in §84) for ACC-19 and for the next Primates' Meeting.
83. Over the last decades, meetings of the Lambeth Conference, Primates, and Anglican Consultative Council have become increasingly collaborative. A Design Group, composed of leaders from around the Anglican Communion, works with the Archbishop of Canterbury to plan the Lambeth Conference, incorporating financial backing of the ACC and recommended consultation with the primates.⁸¹ Since at least 2016, primates have taken turns chairing sessions of the Primates' Meeting, and the Primates' Standing Committee has helped to shape the agendas in advance. Meetings of the ACC, and of the Standing Committee, are organised by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the ACC, with whom the Archbishop of Canterbury and his staff consult. In all cases, the Secretary General and the staff of the Anglican Communion Office assist in the planning, organising, and executing of the meetings.
84. *It would mark a natural and fitting next step (a) to introduce a rotating presidency of the ACC between the five regions of the Communion, elected from the membership of the Primates' Meeting by the same; and (b) for the Primates' Standing Committee to play a part in the calling and convening of both Primates' Meetings and the Lambeth Conference.* The President should serve for a term of 6 years in tandem with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the ACC (see Article 8.3 of the Constitution) and will simultaneously serve as regional primate for the pertinent region on the Primates' Standing Committee. The President would not assume any powers beyond those already assigned in the Constitution of the ACC, in concert with those similarly assigned to the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary General. According to the Constitution, the President of the ACC plays a consultative (see Article 8.2.3), consenting (8.7.4; 16.1; 16.4; 17.1; 27.1; 27.2), agreeing (12.3), and otherwise *ex officio* role (7.1).

⁸⁰ Primates' Meeting "Communiqué" (2 May 2024), §§13-14. While the primates did not support "the prospect of an elected primate who might serve alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other Instruments of Communion as chair of the Primates' Meeting," they "began to discuss ways of assisting and broadening aspects of the Archbishop of Canterbury's ministry in the Communion, including through the Regional Primates who form the Primates' Standing Committee. We welcome suggestions and further conversation in this regard from IASCUFO and others."

⁸¹ The Constitution of the ACC specifies that it will "facilitate the co-operative work of the member Churches of the Anglican Communion in conjunction with... the Lambeth Conferences" (Article 5.1); "assist" the Lambeth Conference "as and when required to do so" (Article 5.12); and "appoint ... the 'Inter-Anglican Finance and Administration Committee,' which shall be responsible for co-ordinating the finances required by... the Lambeth Conference" (Article 14.1). On primatial consultation, see Lambeth Conference 1978, resolutions 12 and 13.

Largely symbolic, the President of the ACC provides a check and balance, to assist the ACC in its service of the wider Communion.

85. The prospect of a rotating President of the ACC between the five regions of the Communion, alongside broadened leadership within the Primates' Meeting, would add a welcome and overdue diversification to the face of the Instruments of Communion. The leadership of the Communion should look like the Communion. Already at the Lambeth Conference of 1968, the bishops were speaking of the presidency of the Communion as “*at present held by the occupant of the historic see of Canterbury.*”⁸² In his 2023 address to ACC-18, Archbishop Welby observed that “the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the See of Canterbury, is an historic one. The Instruments must change with the times.” This pertains to the identity and ideals of the Anglican Communion in a post-colonial era. Ceding the expectation that the Archbishop of Canterbury convenes and presides at all meetings of the Communion will enable the personal and pastoral aspects of the archbishop's ministry to be both given and received.
86. The Archbishop of Canterbury, as the oldest Instrument of Communion, provides historic and pastoral service to the Anglican family, and to the wider Christian world, in keeping with the charism of the office. The ministry is personal and complements the primary responsibility of the other instruments to seek and sustain common counsel. The archbishop is invited to serve, encourage, and persuade, as a brother or sister among siblings and peers, particularly in the college of the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meeting.⁸³ Stretching back to Pope Gregory the Great's sending of Augustine of Canterbury to England in 597, the See of Canterbury also stands as a symbol of the apostolic character of the Anglican Communion of churches.
87. Subject to the agreement of the ACC, a rotating President could work with the Standing Committee, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Anglican Communion Office to help convene and host the Lambeth Design Group and Lambeth Conference, as well as Primates' Meetings. This could encourage the collective episcopate of the Anglican Communion to see the Lambeth Conference as theirs to shape to their own needs. Likewise, the Primates' Meeting could demonstrate in its calling and organising the parity of those in attendance. All are on an equal footing.
88. The matter of representing the Anglican Communion to other churches doubtless deserves fresh thinking, as well. With the exception of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, all other Christian world communions — Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Pentecostal, and others — now have a president figure with varying responsibilities who may come from any

⁸² “Report of Section III: The Renewal of the Church in Unity” in *The Lambeth Conference 1968: Resolutions and Reports* [London: SPCK, 1968], 137, emphasis added). Cf. IATDC, *Virginia Report*, §6.6.

⁸³ IASCUFO, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §3.4.7; cf. §3.2.4. Cf. Windsor Continuation Group, “Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury,” §63, following the arguments of both *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and *The Virginia Report*: “While ministry at the global level needs to be personal, it must also have collegial and communal dimensions.” Accordingly, the Archbishop of Canterbury's primacy “should be exercised in conjunction with the college of bishops, a collegiality which is focused in the Lambeth Conference and also with other primates of the Anglican Communion.” Cf. IATDC, *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, §113; ICAOTD, *Church of the Triune God*, V.1. The Church of England's General Synod in July 2023 agreed to vary the procedure for selecting the next Archbishop of Canterbury, “to give an increased voice to the Anglican Communion” by including five members from other Anglican Communion provinces on the Canterbury Crown Nominations Commission (GS Misc 2260 §5; cf. General Synod of the Church of England, *Standing Orders* [Feb. 2024 edn.], 139(2)(a)(ii); both available online). Cf. LC 1988, resolution 18.2(b) for an early intimation of this point.

of their member churches. Were the ACC to find the suggestion of a rotating presidency attractive, then the “face” of the Communion’s 42 sister churches might fittingly be, on varying occasions and in different circumstances, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President or Chair of the ACC, the Secretary General, or a combination of these. In its discussion of this proposal, the Standing Committee agreed that the President of the ACC ought to remain a primate, so that a person of recognisable seniority may be called upon when needed.

89. Again, Resolution 3(a) of ACC-18 specified that IASCUFO should bring any proposals that may impact the ACC Constitution for full discussion to ACC-19. IASCUFO is now working with the Standing Committee of the ACC to draft revisions of the Constitution with respect to its presidency. This will be presented in advance of ACC-19. In turn, we hope that the next Archbishop of Canterbury will welcome the development, and that the Primates’ Meeting will take up the proposal to elect from among its membership a first President of the ACC, from one of the five regions of the Communion. We suggest that the primates consider casting lots to determine the order of rotation of the regions, and that the primates of each region be entrusted with electing the President when its turn comes round.

V. Suggestions for Next Steps

90. In summary, and adding several more suggestions, IASCUFO proposes the following aids to the renewal of the Instruments of Communion, to enable the Anglican Communion more surely to serve the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Church.
91. **The 1930 Lambeth Conference’s description of the Communion should be revisited and updated.** IASCUFO and the Standing Committee of the ACC (incorporating the Primates’ Standing Committee and the Archbishop of Canterbury) propose the following “Statement of the nature and status of the Anglican Communion,” for the consideration of ACC-19. *An Appendix to this paper annotates all additions to and deletions from the 1930 statement in greater detail.*

***(Proposed) Statement of the nature and status of the Anglican Communion,
as that term is used in the Constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council***

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches, which have the following characteristics in common:

- a. they seek to uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their distinct Churches;*
- b. they are autonomous, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a local expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and*
- c. they are bound together through their shared inheritance, mutual service, common counsel (of bishops and others) in conference, and historic connection with the See of Canterbury, by which they seek interdependently to foster the highest degree of communion possible one with another.*

We make this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into full communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.

92. Resolution 3(a) of ACC-18 asked that “any proposals that may impact the ACC Constitution” be brought for full discussion to ACC-19. The Constitution of the ACC defines its member churches as “in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury.”⁸⁴ IASCUFO is now working with the Standing Committee of the ACC to consider new language for the Constitution, in light of the foregoing direction of travel. This will be presented in advance of ACC-19.
93. The **Anglican Consultative Council** should consider adopting a rotating presidency between the five regions of the Communion, elected from the membership of the Primates’ Meeting by the same. The prospect of a rotating President of the ACC will add a welcome and overdue diversification to the face of the Instruments of Communion. The President would not assume any powers beyond those already assigned in the Constitution of the ACC, in

⁸⁴ ACC Constitution, Article 2.1.

concert with those similarly assigned to the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary General. The Archbishop of Canterbury would remain an *ex officio* member of the ACC, with voice but no vote. IASCUFO is now working with the Standing Committee of the ACC to draft revisions of the Constitution with respect to its presidency. Per Article 27.3 of the Constitution, amendments “shall be made only after being presented to and approved by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the Members present and voting at a Plenary Session of the Council.”⁸⁵

94. For the consideration of the ACC, and at the urging of a now-completed Working Group of the Standing Committee, we also propose the following, further adjustments, in service of a broadening of leadership in the Communion:

- a. When members of the ACC or the Standing Committee change status (from lay to ordained, or from priest to bishop), they should step down. They may be re-elected to the Standing Committee subsequently.
- b. The specified membership of the Standing Committee should be revised to achieve a more balanced representation. This should primarily seek to achieve a more intentional representation from across the breadth of the churches of the Communion. At present the ACC’s Constitution does this only through the five primates (by custom this has been one primate elected for each geographical region by the other primates of that region) who serve as automatic members of the ACC Standing Committee. While this ensures some regional representation (relying on the customary method used by the primates) it does not guarantee the same for the other elected members of the ACC, who could be bishops, priests/deacons, or lay persons. Adequate provision should also be made to ensure the voice of the laity on the ACC Standing Committee. We therefore propose that the Standing Committee is composed as follows:
 - The President, elected by the Primates’ Meeting either immediately before or immediately following the triennial meeting of the ACC for a six-year term, in tandem with the terms of the Chair and Vice-Chair
 - The Chair and the Vice-Chair (one of whom must be a lay person)
 - The four other regional Primates who compose the Primates’ Standing Committee (bearing in mind the membership of the President as the fifth member of the Primates’ Standing Committee)
 - A further group (possibly 12) of ACC Members elected by the non-primate members of the ACC, at least half of whom should be lay persons
 - The Archbishop of Canterbury, *ex officio* (with voice but no vote)
- c. In electing the 12 further members, some mechanism should be developed to ensure, so far as possible, the widest possible regional diversity from the churches of the Communion, bearing in mind those already represented by the President, Chair, and Vice Chair. This will need further work and consultation.

95. The **Primates’ Meeting** should elect from among its membership a first President of the ACC, from one of the five regions of the Communion. IASCUFO suggests that the primates consider casting lots to determine the order of rotation of the regions, and that the primates of each region be entrusted with electing the President when its turn comes round. The Primates’ Meeting should also consider an enhanced role for its Standing Committee of five

⁸⁵ ACC Constitution, Article 27.3.

regional primates, in service of broadening the leadership of the Communion. The Primates' Standing Committee could play a part in the calling and convening of both Primates' Meetings and the Lambeth Conference, in collaboration with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the leadership of the ACC, including the Secretary General.

96. Because the ACC works alongside the Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meeting to help the churches of the Communion articulate the faith and order that they share, the close collaboration of all three instruments is essential.⁸⁶ The Lambeth Conference of 1998, when it encouraged "a clearer integration" of the ACC and Primates' Meeting, suggested a potential "change in the name of the Anglican Consultative Council to the Anglican Communion Council."⁸⁷ This idea may have merit in future, as Anglicans continue to discern the synodical character of the Church at every level.⁸⁸ If and as a broadened leadership of the Primates' Meeting becomes normal, its continuing service of the Communion and integration with the other Instruments will become clearer.
97. The **Archbishop of Canterbury**, as the oldest instrument of Communion, should continue to provide historic and pastoral service to the Anglican family, and to the wider Christian world, in keeping with the charism of the office. The ministry is personal and complements the primary responsibility of the other instruments to seek and sustain common counsel. The archbishop is invited to serve, encourage, and persuade, as a brother or sister among siblings and peers, particularly in the college of the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meeting. Stretching back to Pope Gregory the Great's sending of Augustine of Canterbury to England in 597, the See of Canterbury also stands as a symbol of the apostolic character of the Anglican Communion of churches.
98. The decennial **Lambeth Conference** should continue as the oldest Anglican gathering, to enable bishops to pray, confer, and discern together, as well as to address and, where possible, resolve matters affecting their shared life and mission.⁸⁹ IASCUFO suggests that the conference be called and organised by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President and Chair of the ACC (representing the Standing Committee), and the Secretary General, who would together oversee the work of a Design Group. The Design Group might consider:
- a. The potential wisdom of a return to the earlier practice of limiting attendance to diocesan bishops, to enable a more manageable and affordable meeting.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ ACC Constitution, Article 5.1. See LC 1988, resolution 52, "Primates Meeting and ACC": "This Conference requests the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council to give urgent attention to implementing the hope expressed at Lambeth 1978 (and as confirmed by recent provincial responses) that both bodies would work in the very closest contact." Cf. LC 1988, resolution 18.5: "Recommend that the ACC continue to fulfil the functions defined in its Constitution (developed as a consequence of Resolution 69 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference) and affirmed by the evaluation process reported to ACC-6 (see "Bonds of Affection," pp. 23-27); in particular to continue its consultative, advisory, liaison and communication roles within the Communion (and to do so in close co-operation with the Primates Meeting)." Cf. IASCUFO, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §§5.3.1, 5.4.3-5.4.4, *et passim*; ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way*, §141.

⁸⁷ LC 1998, resolution III.6(a), (c), (d)(iii) *et passim*, reaffirming LC 1988 resolution 18.2(a). Cf. IASCUFO's historical discussion of each instrument in sections four and five of *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*.

⁸⁸ See ARCIC, *The Gift of Authority* (1998), §§34-40, 45, 52-55; available online. Cf. ARCIC, *Walking Together on the Way*.

⁸⁹ See Anglican Communion Covenant, §3.1.4 (quoted by IASCUFO, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §2.2.2): the Lambeth Conference "expresses episcopal collegiality worldwide, and brings together the bishops for common worship, counsel, consultation, and encouragement in their ministry of guarding the faith and unity of the Communion and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12) and mission."

⁹⁰ See LC 1998, resolution III.7 for an earlier version of this recommendation.

- b. Whether the time is ripe for the next Lambeth Conference to meet somewhere other than Canterbury, an idea first mooted nearly 50 years ago by the 1978 Lambeth Conference.⁹¹ Canterbury carries powerful connotations of historic and symbolic pilgrimage, but the story of the Anglican Communion's continuing missionary pilgrimage is also symbolic and powerful. IASCUFO believes that the shared ministry of all bishops around the world will best be seen and celebrated by a next Lambeth Conference (in 2032, or thereafter) meeting in Africa or Asia. Besides showcasing the growth and vitality of the Communion beyond its English origins, shifting the locale of the conference will also ease problems of access and attendance with respect to visas. If and as the Lambeth Conference meets outside England, it should retain its name as a historic and symbolic evocation (just as the more recently founded Lausanne Conference moves around the world and yet retains the name of its Swiss origin).
- c. The prospect of other regional gatherings of bishops, as a complement to the decennial meeting of the Lambeth Conference.⁹²

⁹¹ LC 1978, resolution 13: "While recognising the great value which many set on the link with Canterbury, we believe that a Conference could well be held in some other province."

⁹² Cf. LC 1988, resolution 18.4, and the appended comment at the end: "Regional issues need regional solutions. Regional conferences can also provide for wider representation."

VI. Conclusion

99. We have argued in this paper for several overdue adjustments to the Instruments of the Anglican Communion, with a view to reaffirming and reclaiming the ideals, commitments, and vocation of Anglicanism. We offer these suggestions in partial address of the profound differences and divisions between Anglicans. No doubt, it will take the churches of the Communion some years to recover a proper trust of one another. Such a recovery is possible insofar as we face our present challenges and speak honestly about the need for wise reform (see Rom. 8:18). The communion that we share will be stronger — more confident, more articulate about the faith, and structured more equitably and equally — as we engage these conversations seriously and charitably, with gratitude for all that God has done and will do, “more than we can ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20).
100. Returning to the visionary calls of the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences, we have found an inspiring summons to embrace what had already emerged 100 years ago as an astonishing harvest of mission — across much of Africa, as well as in the Indian subcontinent, China, Japan, and elsewhere in Asia, in addition to older churches in the Americas, Australasia, and the British Isles. These calls to communion remain ours to answer and demand no less imaginative planning than our forebears sought to undertake: to grow beyond our ethnic and cultural origins into a larger and more diverse whole. In our day, as in theirs, Anglicans need to set out ideals that stretch us to grow while remaining rooted in the givenness of catholic and apostolic faith and order. We need to recognise the fact of plurality and difference in our churches and cultures. And we need to commit to seeking a highest degree of communion, founded in all that we still share, which binds us together: a shared inheritance, mutual service, common counsel in conference, and a historic connection with the oldest site of our collective memory and missionary sending.
101. The churches of the Anglican Communion live today with various wounds, which we must place before God in humility and penitence, seeking their healing. As we do so, we will hasten the healing of the one body of the one Church. IASCUFO offers the proposals of this paper as a next step along the journey of communion in Christ for the sake of the world (John 17:21). May God make us faithful in our discerning, and draw us in love and obedience to him, in his Son, by their Spirit.

Appendix

Updated Description of the Anglican Communion with annotated changes to Resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted [1] dioceses, provinces or regional Churches ~~in communion with the see of Canterbury~~ [2], which have the following characteristics in common:

- a. *they **seek to** [3] uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their ~~several~~ **distinct** [4] Churches;*
- b. *they are ~~particular or national~~ **autonomous** [5] Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a ~~national~~ **local** [6] expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and*
- c. *they are bound together ~~not by a central legislative and executive authority~~ [7], but by mutual loyalty [8] sustained through the **through their shared inheritance** [9], **mutual service** [10], common counsel (of the bishops and others) in conference [11], and historic connection with the See of Canterbury [12], by which they seek interdependently to foster [13] the highest degree of communion possible [14] one with another.*

***We make** [The Conference make] this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into **full** [15] communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.*

1. The member churches of the Communion are *duly constituted* at the diocesan, provincial, and regional level as they conform to local structures and canons in an orderly and recognisable fashion. A secondary sense of *due constitution* may be noted with reference to the Communion's Schedule of membership, according to the ACC Constitution, Article 7.2 (see §70 of the paper).

2. *Communion with the See of Canterbury* no longer frames the description but is incorporated into the third list of binding characteristics (c), below, in amended form (see §§64, 74, above).

3. The churches of the Communion *seek* to uphold and propagate one faith and order because “all of us” are called to grow into “the unity of the faith” (Eph. 4:13) (see §51, above) and because Anglicans disagree about aspects of the one faith and order (see §§31-34).

4. The word *distinct* better communicates the point in modern English.

5. *Autonomous* is a less technical term than *particular* and communicates the same point (as LC 1930 recognised in its prior resolution 48). *National* is now too limiting a term, given the number of Anglican member churches (also called provinces) that are multi-national.

6. See previous note (5) regarding the limitations of *national* as a descriptor.

7. 100 years further down the ecumenical road, the Anglican Communion should no longer feel duty bound to indicate its (half-veiled) anti-papalism. The Communion can also describe itself without stating what it is not.

8. The proper *mutuality* of communion is carried forward in the sentence and attached to *service* (see note 10, below).

9. While traditions may vary among Anglicans, in keeping with Article 34 (see §60, above), Anglican churches, despite their differences and disagreements, *share* a rich *inheritance* of catholic and apostolic faith and order, nourished by common prayer (see §§1, 59, 86).

10. *Mutual service* names an unobjectionable characteristic and calling of Christian obedience in love that may be given freely without expectation of return. Our Lord came not to be served but to serve. When Anglicans find themselves divided from one another or doubting whether they share fully all that they should, they can commit to humble and steadfast service of one another and the world, which demonstrates a proper loyalty of the deepest sort, in Christ (see §§24, 27, 35, 48, 56, 60, 86, above).

11. The *common counsel of bishops in conference* is basic to Anglican ecclesiology and is enshrined in the institutions of both the Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meeting, which bear collegial and communal responsibilities for the faith and order of the Communion (see §§63, 86, 96, 98, above). Since the founding of the Anglican Consultative Council in 1968, however, it no longer makes sense to think of *counsel* in the Anglican Communion as exclusively episcopal.

12. The See of Canterbury stands as a symbol of the apostolic character of the Anglican Communion (§86, above) and remains a precious inheritance and touchstone of Anglican unity, for which reason the Archbishop of Canterbury is rightly understood as an Instrument of Communion (§78, above). Among the Instruments, the historic ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury should remain one of personal and pastoral service, exercised within the college of the primates and collective episcopate (§78). The binding character of connection to Canterbury that all Anglicans share is experienced in countless contexts and relationships. Constitutions and canons of churches of the Communion are free to specify their own commitment to "communion with the See of Canterbury," without an expectation of univocal affirmation. Some degree of latitude is fitting (§79). Adjusting to the needs of the Communion, the *historical* character of the See of Canterbury epitomizes the gifts and graces of time, sanctified by the incarnate Word in the form of a servant (Phil. 2:6; cf. Col. 1:15-20).

13. All four enumerated characteristics in the sentence should inspire the churches of the Anglican Communion to *seek to foster* communion in the sense recorded in resolution 47 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, entitled "Unity among Anglicans." The resolution called "upon all members of the Anglican Communion to promote the cause of union by *fostering* and deepening in all possible ways the fellowship of the Anglican Communion itself, so that by mutual understanding and appreciation all may come to a fuller apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus, and more perfectly make manifest to the world the unity of the Spirit in and through the diversity of his gifts" (emphasis added). Such communion and fellowship is *interdependent* in the sense of a summons to "mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ," a call issued by the 1963 Anglican Congress in Toronto that Anglicans have hoped to answer ever since.

14. To seek *the highest degree of communion possible* presumes that real, if imperfect, communion may be had among baptised Christians who also differ, and even are divided in certain respects (§31, above). If Anglican churches are to recover a fullness of communion one with another, it will only be by concerted *seeking* (see note 3, above; cf. §§24, 34, 37, 40), enabled and sustained by grace.

15. In every case, *full* communion is the goal, founded on the gift of unity in Christ (cf. §§31, 35, 44, 64ff., 79-80).