

THE EAMES MONITORING GROUP REPORT

August 1997

I INTRODUCTION

- 1 The Lambeth Conference of 1988 came at a critical time for the coherence and unity of the Anglican Communion as a whole. The bishops found themselves facing the imminent possibility of one of the Provinces ordaining a woman to the episcopate, and had to address the challenge of how to maintain the highest degree of communion with one another and how to strengthen their commitment to one another despite differences in principle and practice
- 2 The debate at the Conference gave rise to the following resolution:

This Conference resolves:

a. That each Province respect the decision and attitudes of other Provinces in the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate, without such respect necessarily indicating acceptance of the principles involved, maintaining the highest possible degree of communion with the Provinces which differ.

b. That bishops exercise courtesy and maintain communications with bishops who may differ, and with any woman bishop, ensuring an open dialogue in the Church to whatever extent communion is impaired.

c. That the Archbishop of Canterbury, in consultation with the Primates, appoint a commission:

(i) to provide for an examination of the relationships between Provinces of the Anglican Communion and ensure that the process of reception includes continuing consultation with other Churches as well;

(ii) to monitor and encourage the process of consultation within the Communion and to offer further pastoral guidelines.

d. That in any Province where reconciliation on these issues is necessary, any diocesan bishop facing this problem be encouraged to seek continuing dialogue with, and make pastoral provision for, those clergy and congregations whose opinions differ from those of the bishop, in order to maintain the unity of the diocese.

*e. Recognises the serious hurt which would result from the questioning by some of the validity of the episcopal acts of a woman bishop, and likewise the hurt experienced by those whose conscience would be offended by the ordination of a woman to the episcopate. The Church needs to exercise sensitivity, patience and pastoral care towards all concerned.*¹

- 3 Archbishop Robert Runcie soon after Lambeth appointed the Commission with the following members:

The Most Rev'd Robin Eames, Chairman (Ireland)
The Most Rev'd Joseph Adetiloye (Nigeria)
The Most Rev'd Peter Carnely (Australia)
The Rt. Rev'd Mark Dyer (USA)
The Rev'd Dr. Julia Gatta (USA)
The Rt. Rev'd David Hope (England)
Dr. Mary Tanner (England)
The Rev'd Dr. James Reed (Canada)
The Most Rev'd Amos Waiaru (Melanesia).

- 4 Under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Robin Eames, the Commission very quickly became known throughout the Communion as "The Eames Commission."

- 5 The Commission met five times from 1988 to 1993, and at the final meeting (by which time Archbishop George Carey was Archbishop of Canterbury), four special advisors were invited:

The Rt. Rev'd Penelope Jamieson (New Zealand)
The Very Rev'd Colin Jones (South Africa)
The Rt. Rev'd Arthur Peters (Canada) and
The Rt. Rev'd Paul Richardson (Papua New Guinea).

- 6 In 1994, the three official reports of the Commission were published in one volume, *The Eames Commission, The Official Reports*.

- 7 With this publication, the task of the Commission itself was technically completed. However, during the course of its work, it became clear to the members that there would be continuing developments over the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate which would warrant need for some ongoing monitoring of the situation² In addition, the meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion in Cyprus in 1989, suggested the need to continue monitoring such developments, both within the Anglican Communion and ecumenically.³ Consequently, Archbishop Eames recommended that a small committee drawn from the members of the Eames Commission should meet from time to time to monitor the reception of the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate throughout the Communion. The Joint Standing Committee of the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Edinburgh in 1995 agreed to this recommendation, and the Eames Monitoring Group was created. The members of the Group were:

The Most Rev'd Robin Eames
The Rt. Rev'd Mark Dyer
The Rt. Rev'd Christopher Hill
Dr. Mary Tanner
The Rev'd Canon David Hamid

- 8 Since the Eames Commission was given its mandate by the 1988 Lambeth Conference, it was thought appropriate that the Monitoring Group prepare a report for the 1998 Lambeth Conference. The group would present its findings on how the churches of the Anglican Communion are striving to maintain the highest possible degree of communion, and could assess how the guidelines developed by the Commission are assisting the member Churches to live together in diversity during an open period of reception.
- 9 Arguably, there has never been a Communion-wide process quite like the Eames Commission and the subsequent work of the Monitoring Group which over a period of time helps the Communion to wrestle with an issue that touches the unity of its life. It has been a profound lesson to the Communion to have to understand a process of reception, and to work with our instruments of unity and authority endeavouring to discover how they inter-relate and complement each other in such a process.

- 10 As this exercise has told us something about the strengths and weaknesses in the Anglican Communion, the findings of the Monitoring Group will be important to read side by side with the report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, known as [*The Virginia Report*](#). In addition, our desire as a Communion to uphold legitimate provincial autonomy while at the same time fostering a care and consideration for those with whom we differ has taught us much about the meaning of *koinonia*, communion, not only as it pertains to our life as Anglicans, but also to our relationships with other Churches.
- 11 The guidelines developed by the Eames Commission and supported by resolution of the Primates' Meeting have helped Anglicans maintain the highest degree of communion with those who, with integrity, hold quite opposite views about the ordination of women. Since *koinonia* is related to the very inner life of God the Holy Trinity, such guidelines have sought to stress the *relationships* of peoples and communities, and the importance of attitudes of respect, honour and acceptance.
- 12 The members of the Eames Commission expressed the hope that their work and Report might be an aid to understanding and deepening *koinonia* within the Anglican Communion.⁴ The members of the Monitoring Group share this hope. They believe that this deeper understanding of communion will have far reaching implications for the coming debates in the Church of the next millennium.

II THE QUESTIONS ASKED

- 13 In preparation for this report the Chairman of the Monitoring Group, Archbishop Eames, wrote to every Province of the Communion asking for a response to five questions:

(i) Has your Province ordained women (a) to the priesthood, (b) to the episcopate, since the 1988 Lambeth Conference?

(ii) From your experience as a Province how do you estimate the importance of the open process of reception on this matter in terms of

- a) your internal Provincial relationships*
- b) your relationships with the Provinces*
- c) your relationships with other Christian traditions?*

(iii) If your Province has no' moved towards the ordination of women, what is the current status of the debate?

(iv) Have the pastoral principles set out in the Eames Reports influenced your life and witness as a Province?

(v) Have you any suggestions to make on how the pastoral principles of the Eames Commission could assist the unity and diversity of the Anglican Communion?

- 14 Any other comments which may not have fitted into this framework were also invited, and some were received.
- 15 In total, 28 of the 32 Provinces of the Communion answered the questionnaire, which is a level of response which the members of the Monitoring Group believe to be remarkable. (The United Churches in communion with the Anglican Communion were not included in the survey.) The extent of the response signifies first of all that there is still a high degree of interest in the issues around women's ordination, particularly to the episcopate. Secondly, it confirms the commitment in the churches of the Anglican Communion to the open process of reception called for by Lambeth 1988. Thirdly, it would seem to indicate that the Provinces have a confidence in guidelines such as those developed by the Eames Commission as being helpful to the nurturing of our bonds of communion. Even where a Province might feel that the *issue* of women's ordination is no longer a burning concern within that Province, a response to the questionnaire would indicate that the bonds of communion are a concern.
- 16 The Monitoring Group noted that although the questions were sent to the Primates, answers were received from various individuals within Provincial structures. Sometimes the Primate himself answered. Sometimes the Provincial Secretary or the official responsible for doctrinal issues in the Province. At times it was clear that there had been some discussion, either in the college of Bishops or at other levels before the answer was formulated. At other times, such a consultative process was not so easily discerned. In the case of one Province (ECUSA), besides the response from the Primate, there was a submission from another group within the House of Bishops. That such a group felt free to write to the Commission is a significant fact, and should tell us something about how such commissions can be important instruments in the Communion.

- 17 In this review, one of the questions which arose is whether the Eames Commission Guidelines, need further re-affirmation by the Lambeth Conference of 1998. It was evident from some of the responses received from around the world that a number of bishops in various places have not seen or read *The Eames Commission Report*. Obviously, the access to documentation, and the role of the Anglican Communion Office, Primates, provincial secretaries, the college of bishops, and synods in disseminating the documentation are key factors in any process of reception.

III STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 17 28 out of 32 Provinces of the Anglican Communion responded to the questions from Archbishop Eames. Due to political upheaval and the difficulties of communication, it was not surprising that no up to date information could be received from the Provinces of Myanmar, Rwanda, Sudan and Zaire. The following table attempts to show the status of the question of the ordination of women in the Provinces.
- 18 Some degree of caution should be exercised in interpreting this data with respect to the degree of consensus in the Anglican Communion on this issue. This is due to the fact that there are different ways of reaching decisions in the different parts of the Communion. For example, some Provinces require a high degree of consensus (*e.g.* 2/3 majority) in synodical decisions on doctrinal matters. Other Provinces may only require a simple majority.
- 19 Although not part of the data received, the monitoring group estimates the number of women priests in the Anglican Communion to be well over 4,000. At present there are 10 women bishops of which 6 are diocesan bishops.

Status	Province
No Women's Ordination	Central Africa Jerusalem and Middle East Korea Melanesia Nigeria Papua New Guinea South East Asia Tanzania

Diaconate Only	Indian Ocean ⁵ Japan Southern Cone
Diaconate, Presbyterate (but not Episcopate)	Australia ⁶ Burundi England ⁷ Kenya Philippines Scotland Uganda Wales ⁸ West Africa ⁹ West Indies ¹⁰
Diaconate, Presbyterate and Episcopate	Brazil ¹¹ Ireland ¹² Mexico ¹³ Southern Africa ¹⁴
Women Bishops <i>de facto</i>	Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia Canada ¹⁵ USA ¹⁶

IV THE THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL ISSUES FOR THE COMMUNION

20 From the responses received a number of related theological and pastoral issues are seen to have emerged within the churches of the Anglican Communion - both those which have ordained women to the presbyterate and episcopate and those which have not. We stress the importance of listening to each other as each Province responds to the issues relating to the ordination of women **because listening is an essential aspect of communion.** Among these issues we draw attention to the following in particular:

(i) Cultural Issues

- 21 In the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia there has been very widespread acceptance of women's ordination (universal in the *pakeha* dioceses). There has been some reticence - even resistance - for cultural reasons in Polynesia and in the Maori tribal areas. In these areas there has been encouragement "to break through traditional resistance". Similar reticence was noted from the interior of *Brazil*. The Eames Commission Monitoring Group invites reflection upon the inherent tension between the need for the inculturation of the Gospel, and the encouragement of a development which is contrary to a particular culture. Are there some places in the world where it would be inappropriate to expect the ordination of women by reason of respect for that particular culture? Is the encouragement of the ordination of women in these particular cultures perceived to be the imposition of an alien culture? Equally, are there some cultures where the role of women supports the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate? Cultural hesitancy was also noted from *Central Africa, Melanesia, Burundi, The Indian Ocean, and Papua New Guinea*. From *Jerusalem and the Middle East* the cultural factors were reported to be related to the Islamic environment and the predominant Orthodox tradition among the Christian Churches of that region.

(ii) Attitudes

- 22 The Lambeth Conference of 1988 spoke of respect for "the decisions and attitudes of other Provinces". Several Provinces spoke of respecting the attitude of Provinces which differed from them. The Province of *Burundi* spoke of the importance of patience. So did *Uganda*. *Papua New Guinea* and *The Indian Ocean* stressed mutual respect. *Brazil* and *Melanesia* urged natural courtesy. *The Church of the Province of Southern Africa* noted that women will not be able to function as priests in five out of the twenty-three dioceses. Nevertheless, a bishop who is opposed has concelebrated with women priests under the (male) presidency of the Archbishop.

- 23 But negative attitudes were also noted. From *the Episcopal Church of the USA* came the report that patience was running out. There is a build up of opinion in favour of making the principle of women's ordination "binding". Both sides are reported as seeming to favour a definitive resolution - the opponents looking for some form of parallel jurisdiction as a consequence. The Monitoring Group noted that since receiving the response from *ECUSA*, the General Convention in 1997 resolved that the enabling canon for the ordination of women to the presbyterate and the episcopate applies to all dioceses. Informal episcopal arrangements can be made to protect the conscience of individual bishops. *The Church in the Province of the West Indies* called for a reiteration of Eames Guideline 73 (b) - which repeated resolution 72 of the Lambeth Conference 1988 - in which the inappropriateness of visiting women priests or bishops exercising their ministry in another diocese, without the permission or invitation of the diocesan, is strongly stressed. *The Church of England* indicated that the experience of the ministry of Provincial Episcopal Visitors is variously judged in different dioceses. Some groups opposed to women's ordination continue to feel marginalised. Others believe the Church of England went too far in accommodating conscientious dissent. The Eames Monitoring Group believes that positive attitudes and respect in accordance with the Lambeth Conference Resolution (1988,1) entail recognition of the integrity of the persons who hold different positions. The reports from the Provinces indicate occasional or even more general attitudes of contempt for opponents on both sides of the continuing debate. Communion in diversity requires charity and respect.

(iii) Practice - good and bad

- 24 The Eames Commission has issued Guidelines for good practice. They do not cover all situations but are indicative of the respect called for by the last Lambeth Conference. Most Provinces reported that the good practice Guidelines had been helpful and were being generally observed (see (ii) above for an instance to the contrary). Nevertheless, two examples of what must on "Eames Principles" be deemed "bad practice" have come to light. One example by those opposed to and the other by those in favour of the ordination of women. In *The Anglican Church of Australia* a male deacon ordained by a male bishop in the same service as a woman priest was conditionally re-ordained on transferring to another diocese. The bishop (who has since retired) was pressed by some of his clergy into taking this action. The Eames

Monitoring Group regards this as inconsistent with good theology and practice. It has also been reported from the *USA* that a woman suffragan bishop has been sent to parishes that do not accept the ordination of women to celebrate the eucharist, requiring the participation of clergy and parishioners against their conscience. This too is inconsistent with best practice based on respect for differing convictions.

(iv) Interdependence or Isolation

- 25 Most Provinces stressed their interdependence both within and between churches of differing practice and conviction. *Australia* and the *West Indies* spoke of the interconnectedness of dioceses and the continuing attendance of persons at provincial meetings across differences about the ordination of women. *Uganda* had consulted neighbouring Provinces before ordaining women. *Mexico, the Philippines* and *Burundi* spoke of the importance of maintaining collegial bonds after the emergence of new Provinces. In *England* episcopal collegiality includes one Primate who ordains women and one who does not. Provincial Episcopal Visitors attend the House of Bishops.
- 26 Occasionally a tendency towards isolationism was perceived: either within a Province, for example the diocese of Sydney in *Australia* which rejects the ordination of women, or in the relation between a Province and the remainder of the Anglican Communion, for example it was reported from *Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia* that the issue about the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate in the other Provinces "tend to be total non-issues"

(v) Provision for Conscientious Objection

- 27 In *England* provision for conscientious dissent is provided for in the legislation (including provision for financial compensation) and through the Act of Synod with three Provincial Episcopal Visitors. Parishes may vote to petition the Bishop to provide them with such additional episcopal ministry. But such parishes remain part of the diocese as a whole. Such provision would cease if parishes did not renew their request for such supplementary episcopal ministry. *The Church of England's* unique relationship with the state required more complex and extensive formal legislative provision. In *Wales* there is an episcopal assistant to the Archbishop who will minister to dissenting parishes and clergy throughout the province. *The Church of the Province of Southern Africa* has issued *Guidelines to Provide for Conscientious Objections to the Ministry of Women as Priests*. These include the clear affirmation that to dissent to the ordination of women is not to be a disloyal Anglican. And that there will be no coercion, penalization, or canonical disability for those objecting. No bishop is obliged to ordain, licence or institute a woman priest. Placement must also take account of conscientious objection. A number of Provinces have also paid attention to the selection of candidates for ministry and to appointments, with a view to protecting the position of those who have conscientious objections, and to the placement of women priests where there is difficulty.
- 28 Other Provinces have moved away from special provision for those who remain opposed to the ordination of women. *The Anglican Church of Canada* rescinded its 1975 conscience clause in 1986, subject to its continued applicability to those who had already availed themselves of it. It has been legally held that from 1986 only bishops who availed themselves of the conscience clause before 1986 may legally refuse to ordain women as priests. Following the decision in 1976 to ordain women to the priesthood, a conscience clause was agreed by the *ECUSA* House of Bishops to protect the integrity of bishops who could not in conscience so ordain. Furthermore, the canon concerning the ordination of women was interpreted by those opposed to the ordination of women as permissive rather than mandatory. Five dioceses declined to ordain women. Tension regarding the interpretation of the canon rose. A motion interpreting the canon as mandatory was presented to the 1994 General Convention by those opposed to women's ordination. This was not accepted but an opinion was sought from the Constitution and Canons Committee. In 1995 the House of Bishops received its findings - which were that the 1976 resolution was mandatory. This was presented to the 1997 General Convention, and the enabling canon for the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate was

resolved to apply to all dioceses. Nevertheless, while preventing a bishop inhibiting a woman priest from going to a congregation so requesting, the canon does not require such a bishop to personally ordain or institute the woman priest. He must, however, make provision for a visiting bishop to ordain or institute her. While "provincial episcopal visitors" have not been accepted in the USA (General Convention, 1991), informal pastoral visiting arrangements have been developed. Neighbouring diocesans, or retired bishops, on either side of the debate, are used in some dioceses.

(vi) Continuing Theological Reflection

- 29 The Province of Papua New Guinea reported a continuing theological questioning of the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate. The ordination of a woman is not considered appropriate "at this stage" nor a subject for debate on the grounds of New Testament evidence, cultural considerations, the lack of authority for the Anglican Church to change the character of the apostolic ministry, and ecumenical implications. Nevertheless, relationships with other Provinces are not hindered on the basis of mutual respect. Continued theological reflection was not reported elsewhere, though many Provinces reported general acceptance - positive reception - of the ordination of women to the presbyterate. The *Province of the Anglican Church in South East Asia* has said, "it is wrong to consider the open process of reception where the principle is wrong and not accepted," and "there is no debate where scripture, tradition and common sense are clear."

(vii) Communication and Use of the Guidelines

- 30 A number of Provinces reported the great value and usefulness of the Eames Commission Guidelines: notably, the *West Indies, England* and the *USA*. In some other cases there seemed little awareness of their existence. In one case they had been lost. In another Province they were not known and had had "no airing" in that Province.
- 31 The *Province of Korea* notes that because there is no Korean translation of the Reports, they have not been read by the majority of clergy or laity. "The pastoral principles have had no influence on the life and witness of this Province."

- 32 The Eames Monitoring Group registered that there is a serious communication problem and a lack of awareness in a small number of Provinces of the intention and consensus of the Lambeth Conference to invite the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish the Eames Commission in order to maintain the highest possible degree of communion between the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. Technical problems cannot have helped communication: various editions of the Eames Commission Reports, changes in paragraph numbering between the individual and collected reports, above all translation questions and the availability of the reports.
- 33 When bodies such as the Eames Commission are asked to serve the Anglican Communion in the future it is absolutely necessary to ensure that proper resources are earmarked for the appropriate distribution and reception of their findings. What has been asked by the Communion ought to be more easily available throughout the Communion. *The Church of the Province of Kenya* made a heartfelt plea for this. A notable example of good practice was the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai* which translated the reports into Japanese in time for the 1996 meeting of its General Synod.

V THE ECUMENICAL DIMENSION

- 34 A large number of Provinces spoke of the ecumenical dimensions of either the debate or the practice of the ordination of women to the presbyterate or episcopate. *Australia* for example reported no adverse reaction in spite of the official positions of some churches. *The Church of the Province of Kenya* reported similarly. *Jerusalem and the Middle East* noted their proximity to the Orthodox Churches and the consequent delicacy of the issue for them. In *Scotland* relations with the Reformed (Church of Scotland) have improved. In a number of places good relations with the Roman Catholic Church continue in spite of the ordination of women. In *Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia* Roman Catholic lay people and priests are reported as welcoming the ordination of women. The woman bishop does not attend an otherwise all male Anglican-Roman Catholic bishops' meeting. In the *USA* the ordination of women has been a difficulty with the Orthodox, the Old Catholic and the Roman Catholic Churches. Conversely, with other Churches it has enhanced relations. Many Provinces, such as *Uganda* spoke of other Christian traditions respecting them for their decision. In *Papua New Guinea* the decision not to ordain women has enhanced their close relations with the Roman Catholic Church.

- 35 Women's ordination in the *Church of England* has had an effect on ecumenical relations. The Roman Catholic, Orthodox and some Old Catholic Churches view this development as an obstacle in the movement to the visible unity of the Church. In England joint pastoral committees have been set up with both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches to ensure pastoral care for those priests who wish to enter the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Church.
- 36 The Free Churches who already ordain women see this development as an important step forward to closer visible unity. However, many Free Churches find it difficult to comprehend how in the *Church of England* two different theological positions can be held with integrity. The Free Churches also find it difficult to understand "the open process of reception" and "extended episcopal oversight."
- 37 The Church of England also noted that women's ordination has had an effect on the Porvoo Communion. Some Porvoo Churches ordain women, some do not. This has led to a valuable interchange concerning the experience of women clergy as well as closer relationships between traditionalists of both Lutheran and Anglican member churches of the Porvoo Communion. It is agreed that a woman bishop of any of the Porvoo Churches may not exercise episcopal ministry in the provinces of Canterbury and York, nor any priest, male or female, ordained by her.
- 38 A further effect on ecumenical relations can be seen in the Report of the *Church of England-Methodist Conversations*. Because in the Methodist Church women presbyters may exercise a ministry of oversight (*episcopate*) as Chairmen of Districts and are eligible to serve as Chairmen of Conference, the participants in the conversations must deal with the fact that the Church of England explicitly forbids women in oversight ministry.

VI RECEPTION

(i) The Place of Reception in *The Grindrod Report*

39 The part that reception plays in the life of the Church has been fundamental to the way in which the Anglican Communion has understood itself wrestling with the question of the ordination of women to the presbyterate and the episcopate. When the question of women bishops was on the agenda in the *Episcopal Church in the USA* it was brought, after it had gone through ECUSA's own legislative procedure, to the Primates' Meeting. The Primates set up a working party, charged with the tasks of seeking out the mind of all of the other Provinces and of exploring the theological, pastoral and ecumenical implications, in order that the Lambeth Conference might responsibly, and in an informed way, deliberate on the matter. This Working Party produced *The Grindrod Report*. Reception was a major theme in this report. It is worth quoting in full what was said on reception in the final section of *The Grindrod Report* because it was this understanding which lay behind the Lambeth Conference Resolution on Women in the Episcopate, (Resolution I).

Reception

90. It is not in the remit of the Working Party to make recommendations either for or against the ordination of women to the episcopate. However, we have constantly been struck by the importance of the theological concept of reception. We note that in the case of the admission of Gentiles to the Church and the matter of circumcision Paul's actions in one part of the expanding Church were in advance of the decision of the whole Church. However, before this was determined to be right it had to be agreed by the "Apostles, Elders and the whole Church" (Acts 15). Similarly, in the definition of orthodox teaching it took centuries before the mind of the whole Church was expressed by Councils in the formation of the Creeds. Nearer our own day the fruits of ecumenical dialogues, in particular the substantial agreements of the Final Report of ARCIC and Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (the Lima Text) are involving Anglicans, and all the participating churches, in a process of reception. Beyond the official response process involving the Provinces and the articulation of the mind of the Communion through the Lambeth Conference lies a continuing process of reception by the Church. Moreover, in this process what is affirmed in words has to be embodied in the life of the Church if the reception is to be credible.

91. "Reception" is a long and spiritual process involving both of official response by the synods and councils of the Church 'at the highest level of authority'. It also involves a longer and more widespread process of reception. Conciliar or synodical decisions, themselves emerging from widespread consultation and episcopal guidance, have to be received. If in the course of time the Church as a whole receives a synodical decision this would be an additional or final sign that it may be judged to be in accordance with God's will for the Church (Final Report of ARCIC, Authority I, paragraph 6; Elucidation, paragraph 3; Authority II, paragraph 25). The people of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have to be involved in forming the mind of the Church in matters affecting the faith of the Church. Within this process the authority of those exercising leadership, individually, and corporately, is not a formal or imposed one. It is an authority supported and accepted by the involvement of the whole fellowship.

92. Whenever a matter is tested by the Church there is necessarily an openness about the question. The continuing communion of Christians with one another in faith and worship maintains the underlying unity of the Church while the reception process is at work. The openness needs to be recognised and accepted by those on both sides of the debate. There needs to be openness to the possibility of the new thing being accepted by the Church or rejected by the Church. It also entails a willingness to live with diversity throughout the "reception" process.

Reception is a long range and far reaching process in which the whole Church seeks to recognise and affirm confidently the one faith ... and confidently to lay hold of the new life which that faith promises. (Gathered for Life: The Official Report of the Vancouver Assembly, WCC, 1983).

The reception process cannot be hurried: it demands patience and listening by both sides and calls for

generosity of spirit. Sensitivity and mutual caring is even more called for when what is in question is matters of faith embodied in the ministry of women and men. The ideal of unity and the quest for truth may both be pursued and upheld as the process of reception is worked out.

93. The episcopate is not the possession of an individual Province, but belongs to the Church. Therefore any decision regarding the fundamental expression of the episcopate would need ultimately to be affirmed by the Church. Those Provinces which are convinced that it is right to consecrate a woman as bishop may wish to exercise restraint because of the possible disruptive effects upon the Communion. Alternatively they may be persuaded by compelling doctrinal reasons, by their experience of women in ordained ministry and by the demands of the mission of the Church in their region to proceed to the ordination of a woman to the episcopate. This would only be done with overwhelming support in the diocese concerned. Such a step could only be taken within an over-riding acknowledgement of the need to offer such a development for reception, or indeed rejection, by the whole Communion and by the universal Church and with care and support for the women so ordained.

94. Were a Province to ordain a woman as bishop:

- *The development should be offered to the Anglican Communion in an open process of reception.*
- *The development could not be expressed as the mind of the Church until it were accepted by the whole Communion.*
- *Even then there would necessarily be a tentativeness about it until it were accepted by the universal Church.*
- *Consideration of the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate within the Communion would need to continue with Provinces listening to one another's thoughts and experiences, aiding one another in theological*

reflection and exercising mutual sensitivity and care.

- *Debate in the wider fellowship of the Churches ought to be encouraged, particularly within existing bilateral and multilateral dialogues.*

95. The Working Party believes it is important that because the member Provinces of the Anglican Communion are not of one mind in the matter of the ordination of women to the episcopate, attention should be given to developing both channels of communication and also pastoral principles. Pastoral principles would help to uphold the communion of the Provinces during the process of reception. On this point the Primates' Working Party suggests that the Lambeth Conference itself may be most helpful to the Communion. The bishops at Lambeth might appropriately seek to guide the Communion by:

- *Setting in motion an ongoing process of consultation.*
- *Commending to the Provinces pastoral principles for an interim period based upon mutual respect and love which could make a lasting contribution to the life and interdependence of the Anglican Communion.*

(ii) Reception and the Lambeth Conference

40 It was with this understanding of reception that the bishops at the Lambeth Conference in 1988 passed Resolution I. Resolution I pledged the maintenance of the highest degree of communion possible between Provinces that took different decisions and held different attitudes in the matter of the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate. The Resolution called for the Archbishop of Canterbury, in consultation with the Primates to appoint a commission:

(a) to provide for an examination of the relationship between Provinces of the Anglican Communion and ensure that the process of reception includes continuing consultation with

other churches as well,

(b) to monitor and encourage the process of consultation within the Communion and to offer further pastoral guidelines.

(iii) Reception in the Reports of the Eames Commission

- 41 The three official reports of the Eames Commission made between 1989 and 1993 return again and again to the matter of reception. The pastoral guidelines offered by the Commission are based upon the understanding that the matter of women's ordination is in an open process of reception in the Provinces, the Anglican Communion and the universal Church. Respect for the positions of those who are in favour and those who remain opposed has to be maintained within dioceses and Provinces, even after a decision is taken to consecrate women. "In the continuing and dynamic process of reception, freedom and space must be available until consensus of opinion one way or the other has been achieved."¹⁷ "Bishops and dioceses who accept and endorse the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate would need to recognise, that within a genuinely open process of reception, there must be room for those who disagree".¹⁸
- 42 In its third and final report, the Commission once more reflected on the concept of reception, in the light of what had happened in the four years since the Lambeth Conference. In particular the Commission referred to the reception of a matter which touches the unity of the Church, when there is division in the universal Church.
- 43 In the present state of Christian disunity, the call to continue in fidelity to the Gospel entails for each ecclesial tradition a continuing discernment of the mind of Christ for itself. Nevertheless, because we are part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, reception is never a matter for each tradition in isolation. It is incumbent upon us to offer our developing insights in dialogue with Christians of other traditions.
- 44 To talk of a continuous process of reception in the life of the Church is not to deny that there are some things which remain constant in its life. The truth of the Gospel is grounded in the canon of Scripture, the teaching set forth in the Catholic Creeds, the Apostolic Ministry and the sacramental life of the Church. These fundamentals are matters received by the Church for all time.

- 45 During the process of reception, we need to make space for each other and to listen to each other in charity and patience while remaining in the highest possible degree of communion in spite of difference, as we strive to be open to the insights of the wider Christian community. Though some of the means by which communion is expressed may be strained or broken, the need for courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect, prayer for one another, and a continuing desire to know and be with one another, remain binding upon us as Christians. This remains true no less within our own Communion than is already the case in our ecumenical relations. We must strive to take counsel together and engage in common devotion and sacramental life, education and theological conversation, whenever possible.
- 46 The years that Anglicans have been engaged with the reception of women's ordination to the priesthood and episcopate have therefore been a time of learning. We have perceived that reception is a continuing process in the life of the Church, which cannot be hurried. We are confident on the grounds of the promises of Christ that what is received will be consonant with revealed truth and thus rooted in Scripture. We are learning how to remain together in a high degree of communion while adhering to different points of view and practice in respect of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate. In this dialectic we need each other precisely in our differences and because reception belongs to the whole Church we welcome the engagement of our ecumenical partners in the reception process. We also believe that the process of consultation and discernment beyond the provincial level represented by the work of his Commission is a significant development.

(iv) Reception in the Responses of the Churches

- 47 Most of the responses to the questionnaire sent by the Provinces to the Chairman of the Eames Commission comment on what is happening in the light of their understanding of the concept of reception. Almost everywhere there is respect for those who hold different views in the matter of women's ordination. Many of the Provinces talk of being helped by viewing what is happening within the understanding of an open process of reception. *Southern Africa*, for example, says that "the principles of reception and openness have helped to guide our approach." In *England*, the complex legislation relating to the ordination of women to the presbyterate was drafted on the assumption that the Church of England was making a decision as a part of a Communion in which there remains a diversity of opinion,

and also within a situation of divided churches. It recognised that its decision needed to be understood within that wider context and that there was necessarily a provisionality about such a development in the ordering of the ministry of the universal Church, not a provisionality about the orders of the women so ordained. It recognised also that its decision was to be understood within an open process of reception. Some see the provision of three Provincial Episcopal Visitors, one for the Northern Province and two for the Southern as attempting to honour the genuine open process of reception. Others, however, believe that the Act of Synod itself has instituted division making an open process of reception much more difficult as those of differing positions are less likely to meet and converse with one another.

- 48 There is, however, indication that not all the Provinces understand reception in the same way. The *Province of the Southern Cone* comments that this concept is not clearly understood. Other Provinces seem to suggest that by reception they understand an inevitable acceptance of the matter. This is clearly not the understanding set out in the Grindrod and Eames Reports.
- 49 Australia recognises and emphasises the lengthy nature of the process of reception. It will be a very long process. *ECUSA* on the other hand suggests that it is difficult to sustain an adequate level of tolerance throughout a long period of reception. "It is extremely difficult for those at either end of the spectrum of convictions. Patience frays, opposition hardens and temptations to malice proliferate." There has been some talk of the need for an extra territorial Province for those opposed to the ordination of women, but this failed to gain the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the joint meeting of the Primates and the ACC in Capetown in 1993, and the Eames Commission. (cf. Resolution 14, ACC 9, Capetown.)
- 50 In spite of differences in practice and attitudes, the overall evidence seems to suggest that the Anglican Communion is approaching the matter of women's ordination within an overall understanding of an open process of reception, recognising the integrity of those who hold either position and exercising that sensitivity and patience, tolerance and respect that was called for in the Lambeth Resolution. Communications have been, and are being, maintained. There is little evidence that collegiality in Provinces, or at the level of the Communion, is weakened, or will be weakened. Pastoral provisions, where felt necessary, have been put into place, so making possible living in the highest degree of communion.

VII WHAT HAS THIS EXPERIENCE TOLD US ABOUT LIVING IN COMMUNION?

- 51 As the Anglican Communion has struggled in the last 20 years or more with the question of women's ordination it has learnt something of how to live in the highest degree of communion possible in spite of difference of belief and practice over a matter which touches the ministry of the universal Church. It has sought, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and within the interdependence of Provinces and in a divided Christendom, to discern the mind of Christ for the Church. The process has not been, and is not, an easy one. There have been, and still are, deep differences with the pain that difference entails. But in this story there are lessons that may be learnt about the way the Church can hold together while discerning truth over a matter that touches the very unity and communion of the Church.
- 52 First, the Provinces of the Anglican Communion are discerning what it means to belong to one another in the communion of God's own life. Women and men in the Anglican Communion, across the boundaries of continents, across the divides of oceans, of different cultures and nations live in relation to one another, because of their common baptism and common faith and because they are bound within the particular ecclesial communion of the Anglican Communion. The experience of the past years suggests that we are learning a little of what it means to belong to one another, forbearing one another in love, bearing the pain of difference, as on a journey together we struggle to discern Christ's will for the Church.
- 53 Secondly, the story of the last years offers important insights into the development of structures of authority and unity in the Anglican Communion, a subject which is explored at greater depth in [The Virginia Report](#). In the story we can see a struggle between the concept of provincial autonomy on the one hand, and interdependence on the other. In the Anglican Communion, binding decisions may only be taken at the provincial level and yet, in wrestling with the issue of women's ordination, an issue that touches the unity of the Anglican Communion, no Province has in fact acted in such a way as to suggest that it is sufficient on its own, that it has no need of the others. When the question of women bishops was on the agenda in the Episcopal Church in the USA it was brought, after it had gone through ECUSA's own legislative procedure, to the Primates' Meeting. The Primates set up a working party, charged with the tasks of seeking out the mind of all of the other Provinces and of exploring the theological, pastoral and ecumenical implications, in order that the Lambeth Conference might responsibly, and in an informed way, deliberate on the matter.

- 54 It was on the basis of *The Grindrod Report* and the presentations and deliberations of the Lambeth Conference that Resolution I was passed. 423 votes were cast in favour of the Resolution, 28 against with 19 abstentions. As a result of the Resolution, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in consultation with the Primates, set up the Eames Commission with a specific mandate to monitor progress in the matter of the consecration of women to the episcopate.
- 55 From Lambeth 1988 to Lambeth 1998 the Eames Commission monitored developments in the Provinces, encouraged the process of consultation and offered pastoral guidelines in its three published reports. The Commission presented its work in 1989 and 1993 to the Primates' Meeting, and in 1993 to the Anglican Consultative Council. The Commission also met and discussed its work with Archbishop Robert Runcie in 1989 and Archbishop George Carey in 1993. A small Monitoring Group met in 1997 to prepare this report as a background paper for the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

(ii) Lessons for the Future

- 56 This experience suggests that a Commission set up at Communion-wide level can be an instrument for the unity of the Communion. A representative group from the Communion were in this instance able to listen to what was happening and to reflect theologically and pastorally on that experience in an ongoing and not an episodic way. At times members of the Commission responded to requests from Provinces to visit and to give counsel. Moreover, this process freed the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates to play a significant pastoral role within their own Provinces and with one another. It provided them with a forum to which they could refer questions addressed to them concerning theology and practice. Moreover, the unity and diversity among the Primates themselves, as well as among members of the Eames Commission, mirrored the unity and diversity within the Communion itself and encouraged Anglicans to live together in an open and ongoing process of discernment and reception.

57 This experience leads the Monitoring Group to suggest that when issues arise in the Anglican Communion that threaten its unity, a similar process might be followed. That is a Province, after making up its own mind, through its legislative body, on a matter which touches the unity of the whole Communion, would request the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates and/or the ACC to consider whether it be appropriate to bring such a matter to the next Lambeth Conference. It would be up to the Archbishop of Canterbury or to the Primates and/or the ACC to determine whether that was so, and to determine what preparatory reflection would be needed to enable the bishops gathered at Lambeth to engage responsibly with that issue. It would then be for the Lambeth Conference itself to resolve whether the issue were one to be put to an open process of reception in the Communion. If so it could call for the setting up of a commission to monitor and encourage the process of consultation within the Communion and to offer pastoral guidelines. Regular reports of the work of the Commission should be given to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates' Meeting and the ACC until the next Lambeth Conference. The Monitoring Group believes this would deepen the Communion of the churches with one another and enhance the interdependence of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. It would also help to develop our Anglican understanding of the exercise of collegiality and primacy in the service of *koinonia*.

(iii) Future Challenges

58 It is clear from the experience of the last decade that the precise relationship between the episcopal collegiality of the Lambeth Conference, the collegiality of the Primates' Meeting and the conciliar structure of the ACC does need clarifying. Legal and binding decisions can only be made at the provincial level. Nevertheless, the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meeting must surely have an authority --particularly a moral authority by virtue of the office of those gathered together. If Anglicans are to hold together as a World Communion, then they must seek a deeper understanding of the recently created structures of unity and authority at the world level and the relation between them. They must be prepared to support and provide the necessary resources for them (cf. [The Virginia Report](#)).

- 59 Finally, in any future process of discernment and reception the place of consultation with ecumenical partners needs much greater attention. We need to establish recognised channels for consultation and communication so that the process of discernment and reception is consciously set within the wider Christian community. In any future establishment of a commission of the sort of the Eames Commission the place and role of ecumenical participants needs to be addressed. While in the matter of the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate account has been taken of what ecumenical partners said on this matter, we might have provided for more formal opportunities to listen to the wisdom and views of our ecumenical partners.

VIII THE VALUE OF PASTORAL GUIDELINES

- 60 The task given to this Commission included the formulation of pastoral guidelines which would permit the highest possible degree of communion between Provinces which differed on the issue of women's ordination to the priesthood and the episcopate. The Lambeth Conference of 1988 spoke of respect on the part of Provinces in their approach to the differences which would emerge in this complex issue. The Commission began the process of providing such guidelines at its second meeting in March 1989. At their Cyprus meeting in 1989 the Primates welcomed the pastoral guidelines and expressed their appreciation for the attempt to discover "the language and context in which Anglicans can continue to live together, while recognising there will be limits to the degree of divergence which can co-exist within the Communion" (Primates' Meeting, Larnaca, Cyprus, April/May 1989). The full text of the guidelines are contained in the First and Third Reports of the Eames Commission.
- 61 Pastoral concerns have been important in the considerations of this Commission. The nature of the guidelines themselves have been understood by the Communion in a pastoral manner. They are the result of a listening process by the Commission. Through the guidelines, Anglicans express respect for difference, acceptance of diversity and a desire to live together in the highest degree of communion. The responses to the Reports indicate that the Anglican Communion has viewed the guidelines as having moral authority.

- 62 Anglicans have frequently rejected the concept of a central authority by which regulations are imposed on the perimeter. The guidelines have emerged from the life of the Anglican Communion, *i.e.* the experience of Anglicans as they have struggled with the implications of unity in diversity and as they have attempted to live out their faith daily.
- 63 The guidelines have also sought to encapsulate the spirit of the 1988 Lambeth Conference Resolution in its reference to communion. They have emerged from reasoned reflection on experience in the light of Scripture and Tradition. The first guidelines have emerged from our consideration of what it means for a bishop to be the focus of unity. Our theological reflection on the nature of communion has led Anglicans to reaffirm the importance of seeking the highest degree of *koinonia*.
- 64 There is much of the Reports of the Commission concerning the theological process of reception. The pastoral guidelines themselves assist that process and help to ensure that it is indeed an open process.
- 65 A pilgrimage of discernment, and the nurturing of for bonds of communion are characteristic of the Anglican way. It is a way of respect and love.
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FOOTNOTES

¹Roger Coleman, ed, *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867-1988* (Toronto, Anglican Book Centre, 1992), p. 195.

² *The Eames Commission: The Official Reports The Archbishop of Canterbury 's Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate* (Toronto, Anglican Book Centre, 1994), p. 41, paragraph 87.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 102, paragraph 10.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 41, paragraph 88

⁵ Only in one diocese in the Province

⁶ Ordination of women to the presbyterate was passed by the General Synod but such matters must be adopted by each individual diocese before becoming operative. 13 of the 23 dioceses currently ordain women as priests. Some dioceses agree in principle but have not in fact acted. Ordination of women to the episcopate was specifically excluded by the General Synod.

⁷ Legislation enabling the ordination of women to the presbyterate specifically prohibits the consecration of women to the episcopate. The ministry of men or women, deacons or presbyters, ordained by a woman bishop in other Provinces is not recognised. There is provision of extended episcopal oversight including through the ministry of three specially appointed Provincial Episcopal Visitors who exercise their ministry at the invitation of and on the authority of the diocesan bishop.

⁸ Expanded episcopal oversight is provided for those parishes who are opposed to the ordination of women.

⁹ Provincial Synod gave approval for the ordination of women to the presbyterate by dioceses who were ready for it. At present there is no ordination of women to the presbyterate in 11 or the 13 dioceses.

¹⁰ Ordination of women to the presbyterate was passed by Provincial Synod, but two dioceses have not voted in favour of the ordination of women either to the diaconate or the presbyterate.

¹¹ Women bishops are canonically possible, but none are ordained as yet.

¹² Women bishops are canonically possible, but none are ordained as yet.

¹³ Women bishops are canonically possible, but none are ordained as yet.

¹⁴ Provincial guidelines to provide for conscientious objections to the ministry of women as priests are in place. Similar guidelines in the event of a women being ordained bishop are being produced. Women bishops are canonically possible, but

none are ordained as yet.

¹⁵ A conscience clause protecting the sensitivities of those opposed to the ordination of women was in effect from 1975 to 1986.

¹⁶ The enabling canon for the ordination of women to the presbyterate and the episcopate applies to all dioceses. Informal episcopal arrangements can be made to protect the conscience of an individual bishop.

¹⁷*The Eames Commission: The Official Reports. The Archbishop of Canterbury 's Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate* (Toronto, Anglican Book Centre, 1994), p. 24, paragraph 24.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 30, paragraph 30.

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