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# Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches

A report to the Anglican Consultative Council

and the World Methodist Council

by the

Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission

AMICUM

2014



This report is dedicated to Bishop Thomas L Hoyt Jr (1941-2013), Senior Bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, in gratitude for his companionship along the way.



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## Preface

The conversation which this document summarizes began in Jerusalem in 1992 with the first of two rounds of dialogue between our two world communions. The first report appeared in 1996, entitled *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*. For a variety of reasons this report was not widely studied in our churches. After a pause, the second round began in 2009 in Mexico and, building on the work which had already been done, we now bring this report *Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches* in the year of grace, 2014.

Of course, serious dialogue between Methodists and Anglicans has a far longer history than this. The most promising was that which, with Presbyterians and Congregationalists, brought the Church of South India into being in 1947 – and the Church of North India in 1970, adding churches of the Baptist, Disciples of Christ and Brethren traditions in an organic union. Many see this as the fulfilment of the hopes of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910.

What remains to be done? Our readers – as members of decision-making bodies and as members of congregations who worship in buildings around the corner from each other, in many places of deep need – will determine that. Christian unity is not brought into being at the international level: the Church is local, and our hopes lie with you. This dialogue has attempted to discern which barriers have been broken down, and which remain to be surmounted and how. You must decide whether we have given evidence enough of our unity in Christ to enable you to move forward

in whatever way seems right to the Holy Spirit and in your location for mission.

We have done more than review Anglican and Methodist dialogue. At every point, we have worked in the context of our dialogues with other Christian churches, and in multilateral dialogue, especially through our common membership of the World Council of Churches. The convergence statements *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Lima 1982) and *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Busan 2013) are the important ground on which we stand. We believe there is a great cloud of ecumenical witnesses urging us on to action. We believe that our local and regional churches need now to decide when and how to move into closer relationships for the sake of the gospel.

The churches are in fact awash with ecumenical reports. There have been so many conversations, so many wise heads, so much sheer scholarship, so much money spent, so much prayer offered earnestly, in the hope that if we are seen to be one, the world might believe! We have surely reached the point where we know enough about each other. Those who know Anglicans and Methodists from the outside truly wonder what prevents us from taking the next steps.

We are reminded of this if we lift our eyes to see what is happening in the world church. Especially in the west of our common origin, congregations are diminishing and influence in society waning. Meanwhile our churches are growing in fresh ways in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia, and the newer Christian groups which are burgeoning are of evangelical and pentecostal life and ministry. The challenges offered by the trends and changes

in world Christianity put the issue of Anglican and Methodist unity into another perspective. What is the Spirit saying to the churches?

If we are honest, we are often willing to be friendly as long as nothing changes. If we do act ecumenically, we do it minimally, watching every careful step. Or, in our unity discussions we ask of each other an impossible perfection. Scripture reminds us however, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is of God' (2 Cor 3.5). We do not name the problem: the churches themselves are in need of repentance and conversion, of *metanoia*, which means a willingness to turn from our own self-absorbing, restricting concerns, to Christ alone. What we continually seem to miss is that the unity we seek is precisely not of our own making, but for us to receive as a gift of Christ himself. It is in fact the very nature of the Church of Jesus Christ which impels us. 'For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility' (Eph 2.14). This report takes its name from the apostolic commission in Mark 16: 15, which sends us 'into all the world', and even 'to the whole creation'. That is the vision and the hope of the work on 'unity in mission'.

*The Rt Revd Harold Miller, Anglican Co-Chair*

*The Revd Professor Robert Gribben, Methodist Co-Chair*

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## Summary

This report has a number of distinct components, as AMICUM believes that there will be a number of different audiences for which it has been writing. When it is published electronically on the websites of our two Communion, readers will be able to download the parts that are most useful to them.

Part One, *Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches*, represents the core theological work of the Commission.

- I.1 is the mandate given to AMICUM by the World Methodist Council and the Anglican Consultative Council.
- I.2 describes the two Communion, using material provided by them.
- I.3 explores theologically and biblically the shape of unity in mission, and includes a biblical reflection from St John's Gospel.
- I.4 describes the ecumenical goal of full visible unity, as developed by the Faith and Order tradition.
- I.5 draws on previous work of the Commission, and Faith and Order documents, to outline what is meant by the apostolic tradition.
- I.6 and 7 give understandings of episcopate and episcopacy in each of our traditions.
- I.8 and 9 trace the development of different patterns of expressing episcopate with Methodism.
- I.10 is the Recommendations which AMICUM offers to the two Communion.
- I.11 is a Summary of agreements in the area of ordained ministry, based on the preceding theological work.
- I.12 is another biblical reflection on mission based on St Luke's Gospel.

Part Two, *Monitoring Dialogues*, surveys a number of places in the world where there is active ecumenical dialogue between Anglicans and Methodists. This includes:

- United churches in the Indian sub-continent
- Places where bilateral agreements have been or are being developed
- United churches which include Methodists, and multilateral agreements
- Historical precedents
- Places where no formal structured dialogue is taking place

Part Three, *Tool Kits for Anglican-Methodist Conversations*, contains practical advice for Methodists and Anglicans who want to further their relationship, and provides a number of questions that they might want to explore together. It also has some suggestions regarding ecumenical theological education.

Appendices are provided, covering works cited, abbreviations used, membership of the Commission, and meetings of the Commission,.



Part One  
Being and Becoming  
Apostolic Churches



## **r: Background to the dialogue**

1. This is the report of a second round of dialogue between representatives of our two churches. The first round, which met during the 1990s, was the result of an invitation by the bishops at Lambeth in 1988 and a warm response from the World Methodist Council. Its report, *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, was published in 1996. This report noted that ‘this is the first time an international Anglican-Methodist Commission has been established to focus on the Methodist-Anglican separation of more than 200 years.’<sup>1</sup>
2. The recommendations of *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion* were endorsed by the World Methodist Council in 1996.
3. When the report was presented to the Lambeth Conference of 1998, the bishops considering it in a working group concluded that there had not been an adequate process of reception of the report among the Anglican churches and they did not consider that they had a sufficient basis on which to formulate a resolution approving the recommendations. Instead they agreed to the setting up of a joint working group with the World Methodist Council to promote, encourage and monitor regional developments and when appropriate to
  - consider ways of celebrating regional agreements of mutual acknowledgement;
  - prepare, in full accordance with the principles set out in the report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission, guidelines for
4. moving beyond acknowledgement to the reconciliation of churches and, within that, the reconciliation of ordained ministries and structures for common decision-making.
4. In the years which followed, the concern that our dialogue was not progressing quickly enough gave rise to a further initiative. This resulted in a gathering of a dozen representatives at Wesley’s Chapel in London in November 2007, which called for a new commission to be formed by the Standing Committee on Ecumenics and Dialogue of the World Methodist Council and the Joint Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council, and drew up terms of reference.
5. The London meeting proposed for the Commission the mandate presented at the end of this section. It was endorsed by the Standing Committee on Ecumenics and Dialogue of the World Methodist Council and the Joint Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council:
6. The Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM) met for the first time in Mexico City in January 2009 and has met on five occasions altogether. The Commission was chosen as a single unit to represent the spread of the churches wherever they live and work together, inviting Methodists and Anglicans from almost all regions of the world. The list of members and consultants may be read at the end of this document. A Lutheran observer was invited to be part of the process as an ecumenical witness.
7. At its final plenary meeting in Jamaica in February 2013 the Commission prepared this report, assisted by a drafting team that met in advance.

<sup>1</sup> *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, (SAC)#2

Before preparing the final draft, the team sought comments from a wide range of theologians, pastors and lay people. The report is offered to the World Methodist Council and the Anglican Consultative Council. It is structured according to the terms of the mandate, thus giving an account of how the Commission fulfilled each of the directives given to it.

### **The Mandate for the Commission**

**To monitor** dialogues and relationships between Anglican and Methodist churches worldwide,

- listening to the challenges and opportunities offered in the variety of contexts
- gathering information and insights
- reviewing and evaluating agreements and theological statements, and
- sharing the best practices learned.

**To resource** developing Anglican–Methodist relationships around the world, in particular by:

- engaging in theological reflection on the nature of the unity we seek;
- clarifying questions to be addressed.

**To propose** ways towards the full visible unity of Anglicans and Methodists, by

- suggesting guidelines and protocols; and
- offering models for the reconciliation of churches and ministries.

## 2: Who are the partners in this dialogue?

### The Anglican Communion<sup>2</sup>

8. The Anglican Communion comprises 38 self-governing member churches or provinces that share several things in common, including doctrine, ways of worshipping, mission, and a focus of unity in the Archbishop of Canterbury. Formal mechanisms for meeting include the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting, together known as the Instruments of Communion. These Instruments of Communion are served by a secretariat based at the Anglican Communion Office in London.
9. It was in 1867 that Lambeth Palace hosted the first conference for Anglican bishops from around the world. Today, the Archbishop of Canterbury calls a Lambeth Conference every ten years. The last, in 2008, saw more than 800 bishops from around the world invited to Canterbury. Bishops attending the 1968 Lambeth Conference called for a body representative of all sections of the churches – laity, clergy and bishops – to co-ordinate aspects of international Anglican ecumenical and mission work. The resulting body was the Anglican Consultative Council, which meets approximately every three years. Since 1979 the Archbishop of Canterbury has also regularly invited the chief bishops of the provinces (known as *primates*) to join him in a meeting for consultation, prayer and reflection on theological, social and international matters. These Primates' Meetings take place approximately every two years.
10. Most Communion life, however, is found in the relationships between Anglicans at all levels of church life and work around the globe; dioceses linked with dioceses, parishes with parishes, people with people, all working to further God's mission. There are around 85 million people on six continents who call themselves Anglican (or Episcopalian), in more than 165 countries. These Christian brothers and sisters share prayer, resources, support and knowledge across geographical and cultural boundaries.
11. As with any family, the Anglican Communion's members have a range of differing opinions. This means that the Anglican tradition has always valued its diversity, and has never been afraid to publicly tackle the hard questions of life and faith. Such diversity can on occasion lead to conflict, and in recent years the Communion has been challenged as to how to discern a common mind.
12. In continuity with the ancient Celtic and Saxon churches of Britain, and Britain's place within Catholic Europe, Anglicanism found its distinctive identity in the 16th and 17th centuries. At the Reformation national churches emerged in England, Ireland and Scotland. With the American Revolution, an autonomous Episcopal Church was founded in the United States and later Anglican or Episcopal churches were founded across the globe as a result of the missionary movements of the 18th and 19th centuries.
13. There can be many differences between individual Anglican churches, but all Anglicans hold these in common:

<sup>2</sup> The Anglican Communion website is at [www.aco.org/resources/acis/](http://www.aco.org/resources/acis/)

- the holy Bible, comprising the Old and New Testaments, as a basis of our faith;
  - the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds as the basic statements of Christian belief;
  - recognition of the sacraments of baptism and holy communion; and
  - the historic episcopate – ours [Anglicanism] is a Christian tradition with bishops.
14. This quadrilateral, drawn up in the 19th century, is one of the definitions of Anglican faith and ministry. Another is a style of worship which has its roots in the *Book of Common Prayer* and the services of ordination (the Ordinal). Anglicans also celebrate the eucharist (also known as the holy communion, the Lord's supper or the mass), the sacrament of baptism and other rites including confirmation, reconciliation, marriage, anointing of the sick, and ordination.
15. Anglicanism rests on the three pillars of scripture, tradition and reason, with scripture as primary. Anglicanism has always described itself as both catholic and reformed.
16. Following the teachings of Jesus Christ, Anglicans are committed to proclaiming the good news of the gospel to all creation as expressed in the Marks of Mission:
- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
  - To teach, baptize and nurture new believers;
  - To respond to human need by loving service;
  - To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation;
  - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
17. This is expressed in all areas of a Christian's life: their words and their actions. Therefore, members of the Anglican Communion around the world are involved with a range of life-changing activities that include evangelism and church growth; providing food, shelter and clothing to those in need; speaking out with and for the oppressed; and setting up schools, hospitals, clinics and universities.
18. There are also international Anglican networks and Anglican Communion commissions, committees and working groups that work to achieve these Marks and more. Current projects include a campaign to end violence against women and children, a project to understand how Anglicans read and interpret the Bible, and an alliance coordinating global Anglican relief, development and advocacy efforts.

### **The World Methodist Council<sup>3</sup>**

19. The World Methodist Council is a worldwide association of 77 Methodist, Wesleyan and Uniting and United Churches which between them represent over 80 million people. The Council seeks to engage, empower and serve the member churches by encouraging Methodist unity in witness, facilitating mission in the world, and fostering ecumenical and inter-religious activities. It promotes obedience to the commandment of Jesus Christ to love God and neighbour and to fulfil the commission of Christ to make disciples.
20. What is now the World Methodist Council finds its origins in a conference held at Wesley's Chapel, London, in 1881. On this occasion some

<sup>3</sup> [www.worldmethodistcouncil.org](http://www.worldmethodistcouncil.org)

400 delegates from 30 Methodist bodies around the world gathered for an Oecumenical Methodist Conference. Thereafter, Oecumenical Methodist conferences were held every ten years until 1931. In 1931 a decision was made to establish a Council as a new agency to express the common ideals and objectives of worldwide Methodism. The World Methodist Council was officially formed in 1951 when the Oecumenical Methodist Conference took two decisions aimed at ensuring the stability of the conferences. First, it agreed a change of name to the World Methodist Council, and secondly it was decided that the Conference should meet at five-yearly intervals. In 1956, the World Methodist Council established a permanent headquarters at Lake Junaluska in North Carolina and also has an office in Geneva which develops and maintains relationships between the Council, the World Council of Churches, and Christian world communions based in Geneva.

21. The main objective of the Council is to produce a coherent and prophetic voice on the church's role in the challenges that face Methodists in an ever-changing and increasingly globalised world. It addresses these issues through standing committees, which seek to bring together voices from the member churches to discuss and create official policy on issues ranging from education, evangelism and social justice to the role of youth and young adults.
22. At five-year intervals the Council now convenes a World Methodist Conference attended by some 400 representatives of member churches from around the world. The Council has as its principal officers a president and general secretary with a Council Executive Committee meeting biannually.

Council programmes include:

- supporting Methodist/Wesleyan education;
  - strengthening family life in the various cultures;
  - worldwide evangelism programme;
  - developing worship and liturgical life in the churches;
  - meeting of youth across international boundaries;
  - promoting publishing ventures to enhance the Church's ministry;
  - providing an annual programme of world exchange of ministers and laity;
  - offering studies through the quinquennial Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies.
23. The Council has no jurisdiction over the member churches in decision-making and respects the autonomy of individual members. However, it has adopted the text below, *The Wesleyan Essentials of Faith*.<sup>4</sup>
  24. The Council works for unity in the faith through engagement and dialogue with other Christian world communions, and conversations have been held in meetings between the Council and the Lutheran World Federation (1979–84), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1992–6), and the Salvation Army (2003–5; 2009–11). The International Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council has met since 1967. Dialogue with the Baptist World Alliance is expected to begin in 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Adopted by the World Methodist Council at Rio de Janeiro 1996.

## **The Wesleyan Essentials of Faith**

### **The people called Methodists**

- The 'people called Methodists' form a family of churches within the World Methodist Council.
- We claim and cherish our true place in the one holy, catholic and apostolic church.
- Our origins lie in the work of John and Charles Wesley in 18th-century England which quickly spread to every corner of the world.
- The purpose of this work and ministry was, and is, to renew the Church and spread scriptural holiness which includes social righteousness throughout the whole earth, to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- We confess that often we have failed to live up to this high calling, and we repent of the times when our witness has distorted the gospel of Jesus Christ. Trusting in the grace of God, we engage ourselves anew in God's service.

### **Our Beliefs**

- We affirm a vision of the Christian faith, truly evangelical, catholic and reformed, rooted in grace and active in the world.
- Methodists affirm the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the primary rule of faith and practice and the centre of theological reflection.
- Methodists profess the ancient ecumenical creeds, the Apostles' and Nicene Creed.
- Methodists seek to confess, to interpret and to live the apostolic faith, the faith once delivered to the saints.

- Methodists acknowledge that scriptural reflection is influenced by the processes of reason, tradition and experience, while aware that scripture is the primary source and criteria of Christian doctrine.
- Methodists rejoice in the loving purpose of God in creation, redemption and consummation offered through grace to the whole world.
- Methodists believe in the centrality of grace; prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying.
- Methodists believe in the lordship of Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of his atoning work for all humankind.
- Methodists believe that we 'are the friends of all and the enemies of none.'

### **Our Worship**

- We worship and give allegiance to the Triune God.
- In worship, we respond in gratitude and praise for God's mighty acts in creation, in history, in our communities, and in our personal lives.
- In worship, we confess our sin against God and one another and receive God's gracious forgiveness.
- In prayer, we wait in God's presence, offer the searchings and longings of our own hearts, for ourselves and in intercession for others, and open ourselves to God's Spirit to comfort, lead, and guide.
- In the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, we participate in the mystery of God's presence, redemption and

reconciliation.

- In reading, proclaiming and receiving the gospel, we affirm God's creating and saving power.
- From worship we go into the world to love and serve others and to be instruments of justice and peace in the establishment of God's reign on earth.
- The language and form of worship emerge from the community through obedience to Jesus Christ and the creative power of the Holy Spirit.
- We inherit the treasury of the Wesleys' hymns, with a hymnody now enriched from many other sources.

### **Our Witness**

- We proclaim Jesus Christ to the world through word, deed and sign.
- We seek the realization of God's will for the salvation of humankind.
- We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be signs of Christ's presence in our communities and in the world through our preaching, teaching, and in deeds of justice, peace, mercy, and healing as the outworking of faith.
- We witness to God's reign among us now, as proclaimed by Jesus, and look forward to the full realization of the coming Kingdom when every form of evil will be destroyed.
- We seek to understand and respond to the contexts and situations in which we live, so that our witness will have integrity.

### **Our Service**

- We serve the world in the name of God, believing that our commitment comes to life in our actions, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- As followers of Jesus of Nazareth, who came to serve rather than be served, we go into the world as people of God in Christ Jesus, to serve people, regardless of their economic and social status, race, gender, age, physical and mental ability, sexuality, religion or cultural origin.
- Being 'filled with the energy of love', we anchor our service and our life and work in love for our neighbours, including those we perceive as our enemies.
- Since all forms of Christian service are influenced by a given context of community and culture, we seek to express our love in appropriate ways.
- The life of holiness holds together conversion and justice, works of piety and works of mercy.
- Empowered by God, authentic Christian service is based on scripture, tested in community, affirms life and seeks the shalom of God's reign.
- Recalling the story of the Samaritan (Lk 10.25), we express and claim compassion for all people and accept the call in Christ to 'suffer with' the least of these in humility and love.

## Our Common Life

- We share a commitment to Jesus Christ that manifests itself in a common heart and life, binding believers together in a common fellowship and anticipating solidarity within the human family.
- Having experienced the gospel of Jesus Christ as a liberating power from all oppression, we stand in solidarity with all people who seek freedom, peace and justice.
- Knowing that the love we share in Christ is stronger than our conflicts, broader than our opinions, and deeper than the wounds we inflict on one another, we commit ourselves to participation in our congregations, denominations and the whole Christian family for the purpose of nurture, outreach and witness.
- Remembering our gospel commitment to 'love our neighbours', we will, through dialogue and partnerships for service to the world, endeavour to establish relationships with believers of other religious traditions.

### 3: The shape of unity in mission

25. We begin our task as a Commission by reflecting on the purpose that we believe God has for us as Methodists and Anglicans around the world. We believe that God's gracious purpose embraces our unity in Christ and our mission within the mission of God. We are persuaded that, with all our fellow Christians, we are called by the Holy Spirit to know and love God the Holy Trinity and to worship, serve and glorify God in this world and in the world to come. We believe as a Commission, therefore, that the will of God for us all, as Methodists and Anglicans, is to *work and pray for such unity as will be for the glory of God, the wellbeing of God's Church, and the effectiveness of God's mission in the world.*
26. Behind this statement of intent lies the profound biblical conviction that the unity of the church is an imperative that honours God, reveals the true nature of Christ's church, and commends the Christian gospel to those who do not yet believe. To put our aim more concisely: *visible unity in a common mission* must be our goal. The scriptures, the work of the Faith and Order tradition within the ecumenical movement, and the teaching of both our families of churches on the nature and mission of the Church demand no less.
27. The churches of the Anglican and the Methodist world communions are both fully committed to the twin biblical imperatives of mission and unity. The title of our Commission reflects the fact that both communions recognize that these two imperatives cannot be separated, but must be held together. In adopting this approach, both of our communions are acknowledging that there is an inseparable connection between unity and mission in biblical theology. We see this inseparable connection between mission and unity in the fact that the two commandments that are explicitly given by Jesus Christ to his apostles in the gospels are to proclaim the gospel in word and sacrament and so make disciples of all nations (here is the call to mission: Mt 28.16ff) and to love one another as he has loved them, so that it will be visible to all that they are his disciples (here is the call to unity: Jn 13.34-35).
28. Because the inseparable biblical connection between mission and unity is made particularly clearly in St John's Gospel, we begin with some brief Johannine reflections. In John 10 Jesus says:
- I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (Jn 10.11, 14-16)
29. Here we see that Christ will sacrifice his life for his own, those who hear his voice and follow his call (Jn 10.3). Between him and his flock there is an intimate bond of trust and devotion: they 'know' each other as the Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father (vv 14-15). Besides those gathered around him in his earthly mission, there are those, already known to God, who are to become disciples in the future: 'other sheep that do not belong to this fold' (v 16). The good shepherd

- will seek to gather them also and they will respond to his call as they recognize his voice. He wants to have all the sheep together in one flock, enclosed in one sheepfold: 'they shall become one flock' (Jn 10.16). This outcome is characterized above all by *singularity*. There is only one gate (vv 2, 7, 9), only one flock and only one shepherd. It is for this united flock – not for a plurality of all sorts of various flocks – that he will lay down his life. He will die to gather the sheep. The purpose of his death will not be completely fulfilled until they are one. The good shepherd's mission is to unite.
30. There are strong cross-currents between John 10 and John 11. In John 11.50-52 Caiaphas cynically proposes that it is better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed. The evangelist comments that the high priest spoke more than he knew: 'He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God.' John has already dropped a hint about the future gathering in of the Gentiles in chapter 6, where the fragments of the miraculous loaves at the feeding of the five thousand are collected in twelve baskets, as if to say that when Israel has been fed there will be plenty left over for others. The link between that passage and the present text is found in an early Christian text, the *Didache* (9.4): 'As this broken bread (*or* grain) was scattered on the hills and was gathered up and became one, so may thy Church be gathered up from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom.' Christ would die 'to gather into one.' He would go to the cross for the unity of his people. Just as in John 10 the good shepherd would 'bring' the other sheep and form one flock, one fold, so here Jesus would 'gather' God's scattered children from the four corners of the earth into one. His mission was unity. His goal must be our goal: a united mission to the world.
31. What sort of unity is meant when we speak of unity in mission? What does it look like? There is no actual blueprint for the unity of the church in the New Testament, but certain key characteristics may be clearly discerned. So, we may ask, what is fundamental or axiomatic about unity in the scriptures? For an answer to this question we turn to another passage in John's Gospel that resonates in important ways with the texts that we have just been looking at: Jesus' prayer at the end of the 'Farewell Discourses'. In John 17.20-23 Jesus prays to the Father for the unity of his disciples. Just as in John 10, they are described as his 'own'. His own are those whom the Father has given him, those whom he has sent into the world. And, just as in John 10 the good shepherd has a concern for his 'other sheep', and just as in John 11 Christ is said to die to gather together the scattered children of God, so here Jesus prays 'not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one' (Jn 17.20-21). So what sort of unity is Jesus praying for here?
32. First, it seems that the unity for which Jesus prays in John 17 is fundamentally a *spiritual* or, we may say, a *mystical* unity. It is grounded in the mutual indwelling or 'abiding' of the Father and the Son, and of believers with the Father and the Son. It therefore exceeds our meagre grasp; it is unfathomable, a profound mystery. The unity or communion of Christians participates in and

reflects that mutual abiding or indwelling that enfolds Father, Son and disciples in one. To abide in Christ is to abide in his word and in his love. In St John's Gospel, Christ's person, his words and his love are virtually synonymous, three ways of expressing the same reality. But love is the key to all that Jesus speaks of here. The union of which this prayer speaks is a union of love, whether it is the mutual love of Father and Son, or the love that they bear towards humankind, or the love that disciples have for the Lord and for one another in return ('We love because he first loved us': 1 Jn 4.19). But the destiny of the church to realize the love of God lies solely with the grace of God, since in this gospel the verb *to perfect* is almost a technical term for a mighty act of the Father or the Son. Christ's prayer, then, is for a mystical work of God to take place that will unite God and God's people: 'I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one' (Greek *teleioun*, 'may be perfected into one'). We find here resonances with John Wesley's teaching about the need for Christians to be made perfect in love.

33. Here we see how the love that comes from God is expressed and fulfilled in the communion of the church. To seek to be and to remain in communion with our fellow Christians is a fundamental expression of the love that we should have towards them. Love is shown in practice in many ways, but it always involves commitment to the other and a willingness to give of oneself sacrificially for the sake of the other – to set self aside. Love desires to be united with the beloved. In the context of the church love takes the form of communion. Communion cannot be achieved by our own efforts, it is not a human construction, but at the same time

it needs some structures to enable it to flourish. To do all that we can to realize and to maintain communion or unity is an expression of Christian love. If we are not doing that, can it be said of us that we are filled with the love of God?

34. Second, the unity for which Jesus prays in John 17 is unquestionably a *visible* unity, a unity such that it is apparent to all: 'that the world may believe that you have sent me... so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me' (vv 21, 23). When the Church remains in communion with the Father and the Son it manifests his glory to the world. It is a world-facing unity as well as a God-facing unity. The unity that God wants for the Church has its face turned towards the world. The unity that Christ desires for his church must be unambiguously visible to the world in such a way as to convince the world of the truth of his mission (cf. Jn 16.8-11). Institutional and structural unification on its own will not achieve this; unity must bring forth the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5.22-23). In other words, unity must manifest a moral quality and character. In 'Toward a Common Expression of Faith: A Black North American Perspective',<sup>5</sup> some black Christians and theologians have borne witness to the need for unity to be visible, practical and ethical. They have pointed out that white Christians have too often treated unity as if it were a merely spiritual reality. For their part, black

<sup>5</sup> 'Toward a Common Expression of Faith: A Black North American Perspective', in David T. Shannon and Gayraud S. Wilmore (eds), *Black Witness to the Apostolic Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 65

churches in the USA have insisted that ‘unity must not be spiritualised, but manifested in concrete behaviour, by doing just and loving service to one another.’ If our unity does not hit people between the eyes and point them to a loving and just God is it the unity for which Christ prayed?

35. Third, the unity for which Christ prays in John 17 is also a *missional* unity. To have a mission is to be sent with a purpose. Both Jesus and his disciples are sent: ‘As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world’ (v 18). This sentence is sandwiched between two statements that together speak of Jesus and the disciples being made holy in God’s truth: ‘Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth... for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth’ (vv 17, 19). St John’s Gospel says again and again that the purpose for which Jesus was sent and came into the world is to ‘bear witness to the truth’. Before Pilate, Jesus solemnly states: ‘For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.’ And in an echo of the discourse on the Good Shepherd in John 10, he adds: ‘Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice’ (Jn 18.37). The expression ‘the truth’ in John, as elsewhere in the New Testament, refers to God’s revelation made known in Jesus Christ – in his coming, life, teaching, actions, death and resurrection. The incarnate one is ‘full of grace and truth’, for ‘grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’ (Jn 1.14, 17). Black Christians, for many of whom churches were ‘rescue missions and survival stations on an underground route to freedom and dignity’ and ‘missionary outposts on the frontier of abject poverty and white hostility’<sup>6</sup> have upheld the biblical doctrine that truth must

6 Ibid.

be expressed in deeds, not merely in words. If our unity does not result in missionary outreach to the world, and specifically in evangelization through giving united public testimony by word and deed to the truth of God’s revelation and saving action in Jesus Christ, is it the unity for which Christ prayed?

36. We have seen that the inseparable biblical connection between unity and mission is revealed particularly clearly in St John’s Gospel. There Jesus is portrayed as coming to unite and as dying to make one. Mission and unity are the twin imperatives for the Church also. Indeed, they are two sides of a coin. Unity and mission should never be divorced, but should always be held together, just as the theological disciplines of ecclesiology and missiology are simply two complementary ways of looking at the one reality of the Church. In the practice of the Church – effected wherever possible and as much as possible ecumenically – what is needed is unity in mission, acting as one body – the Body of Christ – in carrying out Christ’s command to ‘go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation’ (Mark 16.15, longer ending). We might ask ourselves: how is Christ’s prayer for unity – a unity that is mystical, visible and missional – being prayed in and through us as Methodists and Anglicans and in and through our two churches; and how is Christ’s prayer for unity being *answered* in us as Anglicans and Methodists and in our two churches?<sup>7</sup>

7 On what follows, see further Paul Avis, ‘Forging Communion in the Face of Difference’, ch. 10 of *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010)

## 4: Describing the goal of unity

37. How should we describe the goal of unity? What form of words is helpful? Our predecessor body, the first Anglican-Methodist International Commission, in its report *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, spoke in an incremental way about unity: it consistently used the language of ‘fuller communion’. This way of describing the goal of dialogue was probably chosen to suggest that a process would be necessary, that various steps on the journey would be involved, and that, while we already enjoy a degree of communion through baptism and the baptismal confession of faith, there is always more to be received from the fullness of Christ. So, while Methodist and Anglican churches around the world already enjoy a degree of communion with each other – through a common baptism and the shared baptismal faith; through their common origins and shared hymnody (especially the hymns of Charles Wesley) – there is more to be received.
38. Beyond the particular relationship of Methodists and Anglicans, there is a wider goal, often described in the Faith and Order tradition as the full visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. This expression stands for the restoration of the Church to the visible unity that Christ intended and the apostolic community manifested. Full visible unity forms the horizon for the Church’s prayer, study, dialogue and action – a horizon that we steadfastly work towards, taking every step that we can towards a goal that lies in the hands of God. During the past century, the ecumenical movement has arrived at a consensus: the goal of the ecumenical endeavour is the full visible unity of Christ’s church.
39. So the relationship that we are working for between our churches must involve full visible communion between Methodist and Anglican churches throughout the world. The combination of the powerful words ‘full’, ‘visible’ and ‘communion’ suggests an unrestricted expression of communion that is manifested visibly both to the Church and to the world. But at the same time it suggests an expression of communion that respects the distinctive identity of the participating churches and disarms any fears that one could be merged with or absorbed by the other.
- How did this understanding come about?
40. The major impetus for this vision came originally from the mission field where the demand for a united witness and proclamation in the face of other faiths was irresistible. The Church’s proclamation of the gospel is made not only in words, that is to say in preaching and teaching, vital though they are, but also through the celebration of the sacraments ordained by our Lord and by the provision of pastoral care and oversight, expressed in many practical ways. Word, sacrament and pastoral care are aspects of the total presence of the Church to the world, its comprehensive communication of the gospel. The Church’s message is conveyed in actions as well as words. The action of the Church includes its ministry. So questions of ministry and ordination, sacramental theology, pastoral authority and structures of oversight are necessarily part of the agenda for ecumenical dialogue.
41. The imperative of seeking a visibly united testimony to the world in evangelization has remained the guiding thread of the ecumenical movement, from

its informal beginnings in the World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh to the message of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2006.

42. The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in New Delhi in 1961, articulated a vision of unity that remains unsurpassed:

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to the Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.<sup>8</sup>

43. Thirty years later, in 1991, the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches also enumerated the marks of what it called 'full communion'. These were: 'the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one

8 Report of the Section on Unity, Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in Michael Kinnamon and Brian Cope, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Geneva: WCC, 1996), p. 88

baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation'. The Canberra statement went on to say that the goal of full communion would be realized when all the churches were able 'to recognize in one another the one holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fullness.' It further specified that full communion would be expressed on the local and the universal levels of the Church through councils and synods.<sup>9</sup>

44. The Canberra statement immediately went on to address the crucial question of diversity in unity. It stated that 'diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contexts are integral to the nature of communion.' But it went on to point out that there must be limits to diversity. Diversity would be illegitimate if it made impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, the same yesterday, today and forever' (cf. Heb 13.8) and if it impeded the Church's confession, faithful to scripture and the apostolic preaching, of a salvation offered to the whole of humanity and from which no one was excluded. Within these limits diversity could exist in harmony, contributing to the richness and fullness of communion.<sup>10</sup>
45. The report *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion* also had something to say about how we approach issues of diversity. 'Achieving fuller communion,' it said, 'calls us to build on the God-given reality of variety

9 Kinnamon and Cope, p. 124 (#2.1)

10Ibid., p. 125 (#2.2)

and difference.' It continued:

Difference is not something we merely tolerate, it is our gift to each other for pleasure, for learning, for enrichment in the Faith. There are differences in doctrine and ethos between Anglicans and Methodists that might be mutually enriching but which hamper our present relationships. These need to be understood. Because we moved apart from a common milieu, both Anglicans and Methodists sought to justify positions, and in the process tended to caricature the other. Each took on characteristics and attitudes that need to be re-examined. In order to be reconciled with each other, our first task will be to reach a common understanding of our past with integrity, and affirm each other's contributions to the fullness of Christ's Church. In order to interact fully as people of God, we need to understand our differences and build on our positive diversity toward a common mission and life together in Christ.<sup>11</sup>

46. Building on the New Delhi and Canberra statements and on *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, we suggest, as a Commission, that the unity we seek will be characterized by diversity in harmony. The postmodern developed world is suspicious of institutions and is not impressed by uniformity. For Christians today a uniform, highly institutional form of unity is unpalatable, as well as unattainable! But the culture of post-modernity is characterized not only by diversity (sometimes amounting to incoherence and fragmentation), but also by a longing for harmony – harmony with one's

deepest self, harmony in one's closest relationships, harmony within society and harmony with the natural environment. Unity, expressed as a harmony of different voices, will commend the Christian witness to our world. Through all our disagreements, ultimate harmony is what we long for – singing the praise of God and testifying to God's grace with one accord.

47. Following these classic texts, numerous ecumenical dialogues have looked for four components of unity, which are now part of the ecumenical consensus:
- a. a common confession of the apostolic faith, grounded in scripture and set forth in the historic creeds;
  - b. a common baptism and a single eucharist;
  - c. a common, interchangeable ministry of word and sacrament; and
  - d. a common ministry of oversight.<sup>12</sup>

Where these four elements are found, we have, in a particular situation, the essential components of full visible unity. They meet the criteria that were set out by the Lambeth Conference in 1920 and that have been articulated by the major statements of WCC Assemblies. These elements obviously do not add up to a blueprint for unity, but together they provide a sketch or portrait. In that portrait these four elements must be present, but their concrete form will vary from one situation to another. What is vital is that the texture of communion will show that the Church is visibly one in the sight of the world, even though communion will remain diverse in terms of the cultural expressions of belief,

<sup>12</sup> E.g. *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House; London: Church House Publishing, 2001), #101-2

worship and various areas of practice.

48. Several features of the way that the four elements – creed, sacraments, ministry and oversight – are portrayed in the Faith and Order tradition, from New Delhi 1961 to Porto Alegre 2006 and beyond, are worth pointing out.
- The four elements of unity are all visible, manifested in time and space; they are apparent to the world.
  - The four marks of unity do not imply any particular organizational structure; this may vary from church to church.
  - The vision of unity, guided by the four key components, makes a rich diversity possible. There is no assumption of uniformity of worship or organization, quite the reverse. The distinctive identities of the uniting churches must be respected and preserved.
  - ‘Full visible unity’ cannot be attained simply by an agreement between two or more churches. It refers to the unity of the whole Church.
  - The unity of the Church is both gift and task: each church should take whatever practical steps it can, with its partner churches, towards the full visible unity of the Church of Christ.
49. So perhaps we can now summarize the purpose of this Anglican-Methodist Commission for Unity in Mission as follows: To promote such growth in unity between Methodist and Anglican churches throughout the world as will lead to a new relationship of full visible communion between them, as a significant contribution to the full visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ, a unity according to God’s will and in God’s time.

## 5: Discerning the apostolic tradition

50. The report of our predecessor round of dialogue, *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*, soberly noted:

While we recognize with humble thanksgiving that the Church is the Body of Christ and therefore of divine origin as God's Church, we also agree that both Anglican and Methodist churches, as human institutions are incomplete, frail and provisional, and will be so even if united. We remain under the calling to become with all God's people ever more fully the one holy catholic and apostolic Church until God's final Kingdom should come.<sup>13</sup>

51. Being the Church, just like being a Christian, is a work in progress. Living out our baptism takes a lifetime; living out becoming the Church the creeds describe will take from the first coming of Jesus for his saving work until his coming at the end of time. So where are our two churches now, and how shall we so work together with the Spirit, that we might become more fully what we are called to be? For our churches are both one, holy, catholic and apostolic now, in certain ways, in varying degrees of faithfulness across time and space; and we will be, by God's mercy, that Church of God's promise, together with all whom God calls. Undergirding all our endeavours is the prayer of Jesus that his followers be one, 'that the world might believe'.
52. These things have been the subject of debate and discussion through at least the ecumenical century

just past. Many studies have tried to define and discern the marks of the Church when it is faithful and fully realized. Our 1996 report declared that Anglicans and Methodists together (quoting the key ecumenical document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*) affirmed that

apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibility, communion in prayer, love, joy, and suffering, service to the sick and needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each.<sup>14</sup>

53. Our two churches have not only said this to each other as we have sought to articulate the apostolic faith which we share; we also have listened to the wisdom of other ecclesial traditions. In dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, the joint Commission with Anglicans noted how the apostolic witness is part of the living memory of the whole Church:

If the Church is to remain faithfully rooted and grounded in the living truth and is to confess it with relevance, then it will need to develop new expressions of the faith. Diversity of cultures may often elicit a diversity in the expression of the one gospel; within the same community distinct

<sup>14</sup>*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM)(Geneva 1982), M34, quoted in SAC #40

<sup>13</sup>SAC #25

perceptions and practices arise. Nevertheless these must remain faithful to the tradition received from the apostles (cf. Jude 3). Since the Holy Spirit is given to all the people of God, it is within the Church as a whole, individuals as well as communities, that the living memory of the faith is active. All authentic insights and perceptions, therefore, have their place within the life and faith of the whole Church, the temple of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

This memory, realized and freshly expressed in every age and culture, constitutes the apostolic tradition of the church.<sup>16</sup>

It is because the church is built up by the Spirit upon the foundation of the life, death and resurrection of Christ as these have been witnessed and transmitted by the apostles that the church is called apostolic. It is also called apostolic because it is equipped for its mission by sharing in the apostolic mandate.<sup>17</sup>

54. And Methodists, in conversation with the Roman Catholic Church, noted

The Holy Spirit is the source of our communion with the Apostles and the Church through the ages, enabling the Church to hand on the apostolic faith afresh to the world of today and of the future. The Church does not live in the past, and we cannot simply repeat what past generations have said and done. The Spirit of Truth

<sup>15</sup> ARCIC, *Church as Communion* (CaC), #29

<sup>16</sup> CaC #31

<sup>17</sup> CaC #25

works in a dynamic of continuity and change, shaping and enriching the memory of the community, telling the Church of the things to come, and leading it into the future with hope.<sup>18</sup>

55. Our two churches understand that apostolic faith is multi-faceted. The scriptures have a normative place in interpreting the faith and discerning its truthful expression in every age.<sup>19</sup> The historic creeds, while not expressing every aspect of the apostolic faith, are faithful witnesses to (and ecumenical declarations of) it through time and space. As one member church puts it, they are 'authoritative statements of the Catholic faith, framed in the language of their day and used by Christians in many ways, to declare and to guard the right understanding of that faith'.<sup>20</sup>
56. That faith is proclaimed in our preaching. The authorization of certain sermons for use in our churches has been a provision for both Anglicans (The Elizabethan Homilies) and Methodists (the standard sermons of John Wesley). The faith is remembered and enacted in the two 'gospel sacraments' and in other sacramental rites and ordinances of both churches. It is also said and sung in liturgies and in hymns and songs. Both Anglicans and Methodists share the inheritance of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and its successors, and of the hymns of John and Charles Wesley.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *The Grace Given You in Christ* (2006), #83

<sup>19</sup> Re scriptures, see also World Council of Churches Faith & Order document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (CTCV) (2012), #11

<sup>20</sup> Uniting Church in Australia, *Basis of Union*, 1971, #9

<sup>21</sup> SAC #19

It is demonstrated in the lives of Christian communities and in Christian persons, for, as Jesus said, 'you will know them by their fruits' (Mt 7.16).

57. At the formal level, there is evidence both in our earlier dialogue<sup>22</sup> and in many bilateral dialogues with other churches that there is sufficient agreement on core or central doctrines for us to agree that each faithfully bears a living witness to the apostolic faith. The Episcopal–United Methodist bilateral dialogue in the United States summarizes its examination of the doctrinal aspects of their relationship thus:

The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church receive and celebrate the ancient Christian gospel as it has been transmitted to us through the sacred scriptures, the early Christian creeds, and the historic liturgies of Christian churches.<sup>23</sup>

58. From a Roman Catholic perspective, Cardinal Walter Kasper, in *Harvesting the Fruits*, reviewing the dialogues of the Roman Catholic Church with Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and Methodist Churches over forty years, concludes, 'With joy and gratitude we can state that the reports of the four bilateral dialogues indicate a fundamental common understanding of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, common credal faith, shared fundamental convictions about the Holy Trinity and the salvific action of the persons of the Trinity'.<sup>24</sup> Cardinal

<sup>22</sup>SAC #14-21

<sup>23</sup>*Make Us One with Christ* (2006), #1.3

<sup>24</sup> Cardinal Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp 27-28

Kasper's book goes on to examine continuing doctrinal differences from the point of view of his church which do not necessarily suggest significant disagreements between Anglicans and Methodists.

59. The report *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion* also noted:

Provided agreement remains firm on central or core doctrines, it is important that we do not demand of each other a greater uniformity of interpretation than we experience in our own separate communions'.<sup>25</sup>

60. Sufficient has been achieved, we believe, as to the shared core doctrines, symbols and declarations of Christian faith, but there is a further sign of continued faithfulness down the ages which is represented in the authorization of ministers in the church whose specific task it is to teach and guard the apostolic faith.

### Passing on the faith of the apostles

61. It is important to remember that the Anglican and Methodist churches of today share a thousand years of the experience of unity within diversity before the Great Schism between East and West; and a further five centuries before the European Reformation. Moreover, Methodism as we find it today originally emerged through the ministry of two Anglican priests, John and Charles Wesley, and in England the separation of the Methodist Societies from the Church of England only slowly occurred following the death of John Wesley in

<sup>25</sup>SAC #17

1791. This is not to deny that other painful schisms occurred within that shared history.
62. There has also been profound change in the last century, including most recently the combined influences of contemporary biblical and theological studies, and the liturgical and the ecumenical movements. If division and fragmentation have marked all Christian history, especially when disputes within the church were exacerbated by the exercise of temporal power, there has also been a remarkable coming together in recent times. However, we must also note that the current growth of evangelical, pentecostal and new and emerging churches and movements has led to a further proliferation of different forms of church life. We need to acknowledge diversity and difference in the past, and we need to accept and test it in the present.
63. More than thirty years ago, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* made this prescient comment:
- In churches which practise the succession through the episcopate, it is increasingly recognized that a continuity in apostolic faith, worship and mission has been preserved in churches which have not retained the form of historic episcopate. This recognition finds additional support in the fact that the reality and function of the episcopal ministry have been preserved in many of these churches, with or without the title 'bishop'. Ordination, for example, is always done in them by persons in whom the Church recognizes the authority to transmit the ministerial commission.<sup>26</sup>
64. We believe, then, that nothing further needs to be said in terms of our common apostolic faith. What remains is to explore the ways in which each tradition has transmitted the apostolic faith, in order to discern how we may express our unity in Christ for the sake of our common mission. The issue is one of a mutually acceptable apostolic ministry. A parallel dialogue between Anglicans and Lutherans has considered these historical exigencies carefully, and the details may be read in their reports. However, these observations may be noted:
- It is the oversight or presiding ministry which constitutes the heart of the episcopal office, and that oversight is never to be viewed apart from the continuity of apostolic faith. The fact of bishops does not by itself guarantee the continuity of apostolic faith. A material rupture in the succession of presiding ministers does not guarantee a loss of continuity in apostolic faith.<sup>27</sup>
- Clearly, no simple answer can be given. Where the rupture occurs, subsequent steps taken to secure the continuity of apostolic faith and to provide for a new succession in presiding ministry must weigh heavily in making that evaluation.<sup>28</sup>
- [In the English situation] the importance of the Ordinal [the services of ordination of 1550 to continue the episcopate in post-Reformation England] does not lie in the

<sup>27</sup> *The Niagara Report*, Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcopate (1987), #54

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* #55

<sup>26</sup> BEM M<sub>37</sub>

historical accuracy of its claim that the offices of bishop, presbyter and deacon were present in the Church from the beginning. Its importance lies rather in its expression of the intention to preserve continuity with traditional church structures.<sup>29</sup>

65. Alongside these, we may place this from *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*:

It is important to understand that, whatever the exigencies of history, departure from a threefold or personal-episcopal form of ministry did not imply any less a commitment to the provision of faithful episcopate for the congregations of Christ's people. Whether a church claims an episcopal succession from apostolic times, or whether a church has formed a new pattern for itself out of its experience and particular need, its intention, we believe, has been to safeguard the faithful witness to the Gospel, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation and to which prophets and apostles bore the same witness in their day. We recognize in each other's churches, within the Anglican and Methodist families, that intention being faithfully carried out in the faith and life and work of each Church. At the same time we acknowledge that, in both families, we have fallen short of the apostolic charge laid upon the people of God.<sup>30</sup>

66. This was also an argument which underlay the reconciliation of the relationships of four Anglican

churches and eight Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches in the Porvoo agreement of 1992. As has been said, the divided churches need to examine themselves in the light of history and of the authentic Christian witness of each other, and find ways to heal ancient and modern memories which should no longer keep us apart.

67. The report *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion* several times expresses the possibility of Anglican and Methodist churches taking this step towards each other:

This growing convergence means, amongst other things, that old contrasts between episcopal churches, themselves with different understandings of episcopacy, and churches with non-episcopal polities, might be viewed in a broader perspective, namely, the perspective of common loyalty to the apostolic faith, and obedience to and trust in the faithfulness of God who does not leave the world without witnesses. As Anglicans and Methodists we in the Commission, like many in our communions, have come to view the histories of our respective communions, including our separation from one another, in this light, and therefore regard the time as right to move toward fuller communion in faith, mission and sacramental life with each other.<sup>31</sup>

We see the historic episcopate as one sign of the continuity, unity, and catholicity of the church. We look forward to entering into fuller communion with one another in faith, mission and sacramental life and

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> SAC #48

<sup>31</sup> SAC #63

to the historic episcopate becoming again, for all of us, one element in the way by which the ordained ministry is transmitted with due order. John Wesley himself was concerned with this matter. We recognize that this process will be perceived differently by those Methodist churches which have had a personal episcopal ministry within Conference for 200 years, and those whose episcopal oversight has been carried out through Conference itself.<sup>32</sup>

The Commission entered this one caveat:

We recognize that we have many gifts to share with each other within the apostolicity of the Church including the historic episcopate and corporate or conciliar episcopate. But we are quite clear, in the light of all our work, and the whole of this report, that this must be done in such a way as not to call into question the ordination or apostolicity of any of those who have been ordained as Methodist or Anglican ministers according to the due order of their churches.<sup>33</sup>

68. Listening once more to the *oikoumene*, the WCC Faith and Order convergence text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (2013) summarizes the state of the discussion thus:

Almost all Christian communities today have a formal structure of ministry. Frequently this structure is diversified and reflects, more or less explicitly, the threefold pattern of

*episkopos-presbyteros-diakonos*. Churches remain divided, however, as to whether or not the ‘historic episcopate’ (meaning bishops ordained in the apostolic succession back to the earliest generations of the Church) or the apostolic succession of ordained ministry more generally, is something intended by Christ for his community. Some believe that the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon is a sign of continuing faithfulness to the gospel and is vital to the apostolic continuity of the Church as a whole. In contrast, others do not view faithfulness to the gospel as closely bound to succession in ministry, and some are wary of the historic episcopate because they see it as vulnerable to abuse and thus potentially harmful to the wellbeing of the community. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, for its part, only affirmed that it ‘may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means of achieving it.’<sup>34</sup>

The document then offers this challenge to the churches:

### The threefold ministry

Given the signs of growing agreement about the place of ordained ministry in the Church, we are led to ask if the churches can achieve a consensus as to whether or not the threefold ministry is part of God’s will for the Church in its realization of the unity which God wills?<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> SAC #70

<sup>33</sup> SAC #70

<sup>34</sup> CTCV, #47

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

69. As we shall see below, Anglicans and Methodists, and other churches, have interpreted the ‘threefold’ pattern in different ways, while agreeing that it represents ministries of word, sacrament, ministerial order and service which are necessary in the church of Jesus Christ.
70. Without doubt, these considerations have been a central part of the discussion of this Commission. Given that Methodists and Anglicans are divided in these ways (both between and within the churches), can we find a way forward in the invitations just quoted from *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*? Will we be able to acknowledge mutually a threefold pattern within a diversity of usage, and an acceptance of the principle of succession in ministry of those set apart to be its teachers, preachers and guardians? Will we be able to engage in an exploration of a way in which the ‘historic episcopate’ might be shared in the life of both our churches, in complete respect for the ways in which all our ministries have been exercised in the past? Above all, will we be able to do these things for this one primary calling, for the sake of unity in the gospel? The remainder of this report explores the grounds for these steps.

### Patterns of ordered ministry

71. As *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* states, reflecting the conclusions of several dialogues which have involved our two churches,

There is no single pattern of ministry in the New Testament, though all churches would look to scripture in seeking to follow the

will of the Lord concerning how ordained ministry is to be understood, ordered and exercised. At times, the Spirit has guided the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs (cf. Acts 6.1-6). Various forms of ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Spirit. Early writers, such as Ignatius of Antioch, insisted upon the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon.<sup>36</sup> This pattern of three related ministries can be seen to have roots in the New Testament; eventually it became the generally accepted pattern and is still considered normative by many churches today. Some churches, since the time of the Reformation, have adopted different patterns of ministry.<sup>37</sup> Among the several means for maintaining the Church’s apostolicity, such as the scriptural canon, dogma and liturgical order, ordained ministry has played an important role. Succession in ministry is meant to serve the apostolic continuity of the Church.<sup>38</sup>

72. The Anglican tradition continued this pattern at the English Reformation. In the majority of American Methodism, the parallel with an Anglican threefold ministry is very close in practice. There have been

<sup>36</sup> CTCV #46

<sup>37</sup>Two insightful accounts of these Reformation developments are the Reformed-Roman Catholic text ‘Towards a Common Understanding of the Church’, paragraphs 12-63, entitled ‘Toward a reconciliation of memories’, in *Growth in Agreement II* (Geneva, 2000), 781-795; and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic text *The Apostolicity of the Church* (Minneapolis 2006), # 65-164, pp. 40-71

<sup>38</sup>CTCV #46

other developments in the understanding of the ordained ministry in Methodist churches too. In 2010 the British Methodist Church adopted the word ‘presbyter’ to make it more specific what a ‘minister’ of Word and Sacrament was and did, following on the inclusion of the term in its 1975 ordination rite. When Anglicans and Methodists have been involved in organic unity conversations, as in India, there has been a straightforward acceptance of the parallel between our respective ministries of presbyter. Some Methodist churches in Africa also use this term, and the word ‘priest’ is sometimes heard as an equivalent. The life of our two churches points to a convergence in the understanding of the shape of ordained ministry.

73. As we shall see, the large majority of Methodist churches around the world now have a ministry of ‘bishop’, without claiming to belong to the historic episcopate.
74. The last several decades have been times of serious reclaiming of diakonia as a mark of the whole Church. There has also been reconsideration of the role of a deacon, which has allowed a new appreciation of the variety of diaconal roles in the several churches. Some Anglican provinces and dioceses have a ‘distinctive diaconate’ which is not a stepping stone to presbyteral ordination but a sign to the whole Church of its permanent calling. The issue of *per saltam* ordination (that is, ordination directly to the presbyterate without prior ordination to the diaconate) has been discussed from time to time among Anglicans. Anglican, as well as Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed and United churches have widely explored their diaconal

ministries.<sup>39</sup> Can we as Methodists and Anglicans live with these differences while we explore the possibilities together, as is the case in the Anglican–Lutheran Porvoo Agreement?

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, the Anglican-Lutheran report *To Love and Serve the Lord*, 2011

## 6: *Episcopate and episcopacy in Anglicanism*

75. The vision of unity in mission that we have been outlining is drawn mainly from St John's Gospel. We have inferred from Christ's high priestly prayer that the unity that God wants for the Church is *mystical, visible and missional*. Unity cannot be created by human endeavour but can only be received as a gift from God through the power of the Holy Spirit. But that does not mean that unity is 'spiritual' as opposed to 'real', 'physical' or 'tangible'. The unity of the Church for which Christ prays in John 17.21–23 is grounded in the mystical communion between the Father and the Son, but it is nonetheless visible in this world because it enables the world to believe and to know that the Father has sent the Son into the world in a very real, physical incarnation. The spiritual nature of unity precisely requires that unity should receive visible expression.

### **The eucharist and interchangeable ministry**

76. It is generally agreed in the ecumenical movement that one of the criteria of visible unity is a single, interchangeable ordained ministry. There are other essential criteria of unity: agreement in the apostolic faith is seen as the primary criterion, as a look at any ecumenical agreement will show, but until there is an interchangeable ordained ministry, full visible communion is not possible, nor can communion between churches exist. What exactly is meant by interchangeability and why is it important?
77. The Joint Implementation Commission of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the

Church of England explains interchangeability as 'a situation in relations between churches whereby the ordained ministers of one church are eligible to be appointed to ministerial offices in the other without undergoing re-ordination. The ministerial orders or ordinations of each of the churches concerned are mutually recognized as meeting all the requirements of the other for its own ministry.'<sup>40</sup>

78. But why is the interchangeability of ordained ministers important? To answer this question we need to reflect for a moment on the place of holy communion, the eucharist or the Lord's supper in the Church's worship. We believe that the most eloquent expression of the unity of the Church is to be found in the celebration of this sacrament. We note that the Second Vatican Council described the eucharist as 'the source and summit' of the Christian life and of the Church's worship.<sup>41</sup> 'Holy communion', the culmination of the eucharistic celebration, is a communion with God the Holy Trinity and with the redeemed people of God in the Body of Christ. It is the highest expression and the most intense realization on this earth of that communion with God and one another that makes the Church the Church.
79. Because the eucharist is so important, all churches – Methodist, Anglican or other – are very particular about who they allow to preside at this service. In many, if not most churches, this role is reserved

<sup>40</sup> *In the Spirit of the Covenant: Interim Report* (2005) of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 2005), p. 90 [7.3.1]

<sup>41</sup> *Lumen Gentium II*. [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) choose language and enter 'Lumen Gentium' in the search box

- to presbyters and bishops. Deacons are not usually ordained to presidency at the eucharist, but assist in the celebration. Those churches that allow lay presidency do so under strict conditions. All churches see eucharistic presidency as one of the highest privileges and greatest responsibilities of the ordained ministry and most regard presidency by presbyters and bishops as the norm.
80. While it is important to remember that the eucharist is celebrated by the whole community, the role of the president at the eucharist is crucial. The minister who presides at the celebration of the eucharist has the responsibility of ensuring that the celebration follows the Lord's institution and the teaching and rules of the Church. All ministry in the Church, whether lay or ordained, is the ministry of Christ in and through his Body – the risen, glorified Christ coming to his people in word and sacrament and pastoral care. The ministry of the eucharist – ministry at the eucharist – is therefore *the ministry of Christ*. It is the one who presides who has the principal role in this ministry: bringing God's word to God's people, officiating at the Lord's table, leading the people in their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, through the Son in the power of the Spirit.
81. One of the most acute signs of lack of unity, of division, in the Church is when the ministers of one church cannot preside at a celebration of the eucharist in another church. But when an interchangeable eucharistic presidency is possible it is clear that a high degree of visible unity has been achieved. It provides further visible testimony that the participating churches intend to ordain to the ministry of the universal Church and intend to celebrate the one eucharist of Jesus Christ.
- Interchangeable eucharistic presidency is, then, a touchstone of ecclesial communion.
82. Interchangeable eucharistic presidency is also the precondition for that *unity in oversight* that is the fourth of the widely received requirements for the full visible unity of the Church as a whole and of full visible communion between two or more churches as a contribution to the unity of the whole. The pastors of the churches preside at the eucharist and in the community: they are called to watch over the people in love.<sup>42</sup> While in both Anglicanism and Methodism lay people share in oversight in various ways, especially in the parish and congregation and in Synod and Conference, it remains true that presidency at the eucharist and pastoral oversight (*episcopate*) in the community should not be separated. Pastors cannot be fully united in oversight if they are not united in an interchangeable eucharistic presidency. That is why, as the *Book of Discipline 2012* of the UMC<sup>43</sup> puts it, bishops are to be characterized by 'a passion for the unity of the church... The United Methodist Church and the church universal'.<sup>44</sup>
83. The inseparable connection between the unity of ordained ministers in presidency at the eucharist and the unity of ordained ministers in oversight is particularly clear in ordination. Once again, the

<sup>42</sup> From *The Ordination of Presbyters*, Methodist Worship Book (Methodist Publishing House: London, 1999), 302

<sup>43</sup> *Book of Discipline 2012*, United Methodist Church, #403

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* Similarly, the *Book of Discipline* of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, describing the bishop as 'chief pastor', affirms that 'The bishop is to be the symbol of unity in the Church' ('Episcopal Salutation', p. 3)

*Book of Discipline 2012* of the UMC makes this point particularly clearly in a way that Anglicans could own: “The role of the bishop is to uphold the discipline and order of the Church by consecrating, ordaining, commissioning, supervising and appointing persons in ministry” (#403). The sacramental and the pastoral aspects of oversight come together in the act of ordaining. Ordination is an expression of oversight and united ordination is an expression of united oversight. When ministers of more than one church ordain new ministers together, with the laying on of hands and prayer, they express a high degree of unity. Churches normally allow only ministers of churches with whom their own church is ‘in communion’ – sister churches, one might say – to participate in ordinations.

84. The report *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion* had this to say about ministerial continuity: ‘Within Anglicanism, the historic episcopate denotes the continuity of oversight in the Church through the ages from the earliest days, expressed in a personal episcopal ministry, the intention of which is to safeguard, transmit, and restate in every generation the apostolic faith delivered once for all to the saints.’ The report insisted that the historic episcopate ‘is not the only way by which the apostolic faith is safeguarded and transmitted, nor is it exercised apart from the Church as a whole... It is exercised in an interplay with the whole people of God, in which their reception of that ministry is a crucial element... It is... always exercised collegially (i.e. together with other bishops, and with the clergy within each diocese), and also communally (i.e. together with the laity and clergy in synod, convention or council).’<sup>45</sup>

85. For Anglicans the ministry of bishops is one of the ways of maintaining visible historical continuity with the mission of the apostles. In the churches of the Anglican Communion only ministers who have been ordained by bishops standing within ‘the historic episcopate’ may hold the office of bishop, priest or deacon. In this respect, Anglican practice is the same as that of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. So what is meant by ‘the historic episcopate’? *Called to Common Mission*, the agreed text that led to full communion between The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 2001, explains that ‘historic succession’ refers to ‘a tradition which goes back to the ancient church, in which bishops already in the succession install newly elected bishops with prayer and the laying-on-of-hands. ... The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888, the ecumenical policy of The Episcopal Church, refers to this tradition as “the historic episcopate”.’<sup>46</sup>
86. Behind this reference to the ecumenical policy of The Episcopal Church lies a significant report, endorsed by its General Convention of 1949. The report sheds light on how some Episcopalians and other Anglicans understand the historic episcopate, while seeking common ground with the way that other traditions value visible historical continuity:

The maintenance of a ministerial succession, by way of ordination with the laying-on-of-hands, is a familiar fact in the life of most Christian communions. All such ministerial successions are in some sense historic,

<sup>46</sup> *Called to Common Mission* #11 [www.episcopalchurch.org/page/agreement-full-communication-called-common-mission](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/agreement-full-communication-called-common-mission)

differing from one another, however, in form and in the degree to which succession is continuous in history. Anglican formularies pronounce no judgments on other ministerial successions. They do claim, however, for the churches of the Anglican Communion, for which they speak, that these churches have preserved both the form and the succession which traces back to the 'Apostles' time', and they make the preservation of this succession a matter of scrupulous discipline.<sup>47</sup>

87. So the expression *the historic episcopate* refers to the intention of Anglican and other churches that there should be visible historical continuity between the Church of today and the Church of the apostles – a visible historical continuity that is particularly embodied in the ministry of overseeing pastors from age to age – so that we may say that there is one Church and it is the same Church now as it was then. The historic episcopate does not require that there should be an empirically verifiable manual transmission of ordination, going back to the apostles, in every case. The emphasis is on the formal intention of a church not to make a new church or to ordain ministers merely for its own church, but to preserve the visible historical continuity of the Church from the beginning, in the belief that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted and intended that an ordered community – a body of people with certain tasks and structures – should continue his mission until the end of the age (Mt 28.16ff).

88. But why do Anglicans hold that the sign of the historic episcopate is necessary for full visible communion? Why do Anglicans, without exception, practise ordination within the historic episcopate – bishops for the consecration of bishops, bishops and priests (presbyters) for the ordination of priests, and bishops only for the ordination of deacons? This has been a part of the Anglican approach to Christian unity since the late nineteenth century. The Lambeth Conference of 1920, in its *Appeal to All Christian People*, restated the 'Lambeth Quadrilateral' of 1888. The Quadrilateral was derived from the 'Chicago Quadrilateral' of the (then) Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA two years earlier, which was itself shaped by the writings of the American priest William Reed Huntington. The Lambeth 'Appeal to All Christian People' affirmed that the visible unity of the Church would involve the 'wholehearted acceptance' of four elements:

1. 'The Holy Scriptures... as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.'
2. The 'Nicene' (i.e. Nicene-Constantinopolitan) Creed as 'the sufficient statement of the Christian faith' and either it or the Apostles Creed as the baptismal confession.'
3. 'The divinely instituted sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.'
4. 'A ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body.'

<sup>47</sup>Cited J. Robert Wright, 'Heritage and Vision', in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, p. 34

89. The Lambeth Quadrilateral makes it clear that the historic episcopate is not the only element in the make-up of the Church that is important: it stands alongside the canon of scripture, the ecumenical creeds and the dominical sacraments in shaping the Church. In many of their ecumenical agreements, Anglican churches have recognized as churches those which are not ordered in the historic episcopate. Anglicans therefore do not say that no church can exist without the historic episcopate. But, for Anglicans, the historic episcopate is a necessary though not sufficient condition for full visible communion. In this respect Anglicans believe that they are being faithful to the pattern of the early Church. They hold that this pattern comes down to the Church of today from apostolic and early post-apostolic times and carries significant ecumenical support and consensus (as we see in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*). Anglicans are also very conscious that they have agreed statements with the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches to which agreement on the historic episcopate is integral. Moreover, Anglicans believe that the historic episcopate is ‘the one means of providing... a ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body’ (Lambeth Conference 1920, *Appeal to All Christian People*, Resolution 9). However, in affirming the place of the historic episcopate in their own churches and looking for it in other churches in order to enter full visible communion with them, Anglicans are not intending to pass any kind of judgement on churches that are not ordered in the historic episcopate.
90. Three aspects of the historic episcopate stand out. First, it is *personal*. The historic episcopate is about persons who have been entrusted with the responsibility of *episcopate*, oversight. The responsibility of oversight is also exercised by corporate bodies such as a Methodist Conference or an Anglican Synod (of which the bishops are part, hence the phrase ‘bishop in synod’). The Methodist tradition too gives an honoured place to personal *episcopate*, particularly in the form of Superintendents and the Presidency of the Conference for, as every church recognizes, there is no substitute for person-to-person pastoral ministry – with all its risks and vulnerability: God did not send a committee to redeem the world. The historic episcopate is a particular expression of personal *episcopate*.
91. Second, the historic episcopate is *historical*: it is one expression of the visible historical continuity of the Church today with the Church of the apostles. It is not dependent on a supposed unbroken chain of hands on heads down through the ages – though succession of ordinations is an important outward sign – but refers primarily to a church’s intention to ordain to the same ministry as that of the apostles within the same Church. If a church has that intention, it should feel free, as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* suggests, to embrace the sign of that intention that has been recognized by the greater part of the Church through the ages, namely episcopal ministry in historical continuity with the apostolic Church.
92. Third, the historic episcopate is *received*. All the gifts and graces of the Christian life are received from God through the means of grace in God’s Church. ‘What do you have that you did not

receive?', asks St Paul in 1 Corinthians 4.7. All our churches are debtors to the wider Church, the Church catholic, and our highest aspiration is simply 'to do what the Church does' – not 'our own thing'. We note once again that Anglicans have never said that a church cannot be a church without the historic episcopate – the ecumenical agreements made by Anglicans clearly show the reverse – but Anglicans believe that the historic episcopate is a precious aspect of the fullness and wholeness of the Church, of catholicity. Anglicans believe that they have received the historic episcopate alongside the canon of scripture, the ecumenical creeds and the dominical sacraments from the wider Church, the Church that was before we were and will endure after we are gone.

### **Bishops in communion**

93. A significant expression of communion in time and space can be seen when bishops from episcopally ordered churches that are in communion with each other come together to consecrate and ordain a new bishop. At his or her consecration, the bishop who is being ordained will receive the authority to ordain other ministers. The ministry of the Church is reproducing itself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The participation of ordaining ministers from sister churches is an endorsement that the new minister is being ordained into the universal Church. This act expresses and strengthens the visible unity of the Church in four ways:
94. First, *communion in time*: bishops represent the churches in which they preside and thus embody the Church's continuity in time. The portion of the people of God entrusted to the pastoral care of a

bishop is usually one that was in existence before the bishop arrived on the scene and one that will continue after the bishop has gone. The location of the bishop's ministry (known as the bishop's see in some traditions) endures in time. This continuity is particularly evident in churches that have historic sees, many going back to the time when the Christian faith was first brought to that land. For the early Church, the continuity of bishops in a see was a significant expression of the apostolic continuity of the Church.

95. Second, *communion in space*: in their ministry, bishops link together the churches that they lead. Bishops help to bring to visible expression the communion between those churches, holding them together in unity in the spatial dimension. The coming together of bishops to consecrate a new member of the episcopate in the Church of God is a signal witness to the unity of the Church and serves to further cement that unity.
96. Third, *communion in faith*: bishops are usually charged at their consecration or ordination with safeguarding the teaching of the Church through their own teaching ministry and their oversight of the teaching ministry of others. The coming together of bishops to consecrate a new bishop expresses continuity in the confession of the true faith. When bishops from churches that are in communion with one another come together for the consecration of a new bishop they are bearing witness to the acceptability of the doctrine of that church and its bishop – there is a unity of confession. In this way, bishops in communion are seen as guardians together of orthodox Christian doctrine.

97. Fourth, *communion in mission*: bishops are ordained as leaders for mission whose oversight ensures that the people of their local churches are equipped for their service of the gospel, continuing Jesus' radical ministry. Bishops meet together with each other, with their laity and clergy, to study the scriptures, to pray and to worship, to share their insights, and to encourage coordinated action to advance the Marks of Mission. Thus the church in each place is an apostolic community, gathered and sent to take the gospel into all the world.



*Bishops in communion: The Lambeth Conference 2008*



## 7: *Episcopate and episcopacy in Methodism*

### Methodists and the historic episcopate

98. Methodist churches across the world have developed different approaches to the provision of episcopate. As we shall see below, John Wesley provided two ‘superintendents’, later called bishops, for his societies in the newly United States. These became the foundation of consistent episcopal ordination and ministry in the continuing ‘Methodist Episcopal Church’, and now in the United Methodist and Historic Black Churches in the USA. British Methodists retained the corporate oversight of the Conference and successive presidents. In recent times, the British Conference has been open in principle to appointing bishops and to receiving the historic episcopate into their polity. In particular, the Conference of the British Methodist Church has made a series of statements on this matter over several decades. In its response to the World Council of Churches’ document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), the Conference said:

The Methodist Conference has ruled that the acceptance of the historic episcopate would not violate our doctrinal standards, and indeed has shown itself ready to embrace the threefold ministry to advance the cause of visible unity. Such an acceptance would see the historical episcopate as a valuable sign of apostolicity, but not as a necessary sign, nor as a guarantee... We see the historic episcopate as one possible form of church order... but neither normative nor clearly

superior to any other. We agree that the episcopal, presbyteral and diaconal functions need to be exercised in the Church [and] are, or could be, adequately discharged by the Methodist Church as at present constituted.<sup>48</sup>

99. The Conference furthermore expressed a readiness to accept the historic episcopate:

There is the challenge to all churches to recognize that their structures, no matter how securely grounded in doctrine, are in constant need of reform. We accept this as applying to ourselves. God is calling us to a fuller ministry than we have yet known.<sup>49</sup>

As far as the mutual recognition of ordained ministers is concerned, we have listened to the testimony of churches that are episcopally ordered, we have judged that the acceptance of episcopacy would be no contradiction of our doctrines, and we await the occasion when it would be appropriate ‘to recover the sign of the episcopal succession’.<sup>50</sup>

100. This positive evaluation of the historic episcopate was further supported by the Conference statement on ecclesiology *Called to Love and Praise* (1999) and by the report *Episcopate and Episcopacy* (2000) and it remains the official position of the Methodist Church of Great Britain. The Conference has

48 British Methodist response to the Lima text, 1985, in *Statements and reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order*, Volume 2, 1984–2000 (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 2000), Part 2, 4.3.4, p. 426

49 Ibid., 4.3.6, p. 427

50 Ibid., 2.3.2, p. 416

not merely accepted the historic episcopate in theory: on a number of occasions it has approved specific ecumenical proposals that would involve embracing the historic episcopate, even though so far these have not come to fruition. It should be acknowledged that there is some doubt among Methodists as to whether the embrace of the historic episcopate would actually lead to greater effectiveness in worship and mission.<sup>51</sup>

101. The Irish Covenant Council also proposes a way in which episcopal ministers can be made and recognized by the two churches (para number).

### **The development in Britain of a non-episcopal ordained Methodist ministry**

102. John Wesley's endeavours to form a society within the Church of England which sought to 'spread scriptural holiness across the land' was indeed fruitful, but it also demanded oversight of a very demanding kind. It is, perhaps, no surprise that he understood himself to be, in all practical ways, a bishop. By the canons of his Church, he was not, of course, in episcopal orders, but that model of oversight was ready to hand. He continued as a priest of the Church of England, overseeing an ever growing number of small groups and societies across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. In each case members of these societies were encouraged to attend their parish church and Methodist services were held at different times. At the first Conference of preachers (those who were 'in connexion' with John Wesley), held in 1744, all of the itinerants were called 'helpers', that is helpers of Wesley himself. The work of these helpers was

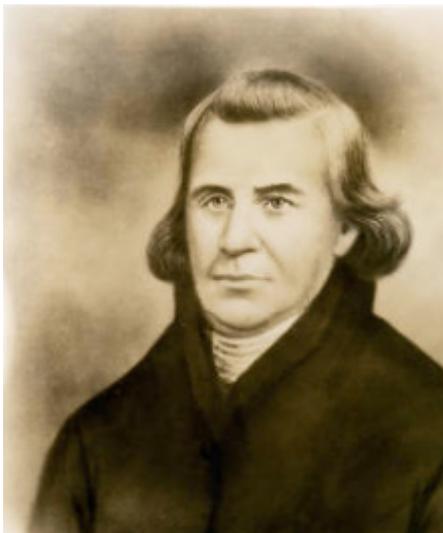
'in the absence of a minister, to feed and guide the flock'. By 1745 the term 'assistant' was in use and, as the Methodist movement spread, this became the term for the supervising preacher in each circuit, responsible to John Wesley for the other itinerants (now called 'helpers'), for regulating the societies, eventually making the quarterly preaching plan and keeping membership lists up to date. It was this role of assistant that, after Wesley's death, was replaced by the term superintendent; that is the most local form of oversight in Methodism.

103. After 1784, when Wesley created fresh pastoral oversight for the new United States of America (see below), he also ordained a small number of men as deacons and 'elders' for work in Scotland, and ultimately, for England. Methodism was already functioning in reality as a new 'denomination', and Wesley's own plans for the People called Methodists after his death de facto recognized this. He appointed a group of preachers ('the Legal Hundred') to administer the societies at his death, effectively recognizing that a single successor was not likely to be found to succeed him in the role he had come to play, and setting up a corporate body, a Conference, to do so. After John Wesley's death, the Plan of Pacification (1795) made provision for itinerant preachers (not ordained episcopally) to celebrate baptism and the Lord's supper, effectively giving Methodism in Britain an independent ecclesial life.
104. A number of Methodist schisms occurred in Britain in the decades immediately after his death in 1791, mostly on the very grounds of desiring a less clerically-dominated and more democratic institution (The Methodist New Connexion 1797, Independent Methodists 1806, Primitive

<sup>51</sup>JIC

Methodists 1811, Bible Christians 1815, United Methodist Free Churches 1857). The so-called Wesleyan Methodists continued to hope that the breach with the Church of England might be healed. The advent of the Oxford or Tractarian Movement and the later Ritualists in the Church of England drove the Methodists further from any reconciliation.

105. The Wesleyans thus continued appointing preachers and calling them into 'Full Connexion' with the societies linked to John Wesley. These itinerant – as distinct from local, lay, preachers – effectively became an ordained ministry under Conference direction. There was at the time a reluctance to make a distinction between ordained and lay preachers. Out of pastoral necessity, the Conference slowly permitted Methodist preachers to administer the sacraments in Methodist buildings with the consent of the particular congregations. Finally, in 1836, it took the decision to carry out its own ordinations by prayer and the laying on of hands.
106. There had been one exception to the withholding of ordination: that of preachers in full Connexion sent to the overseas missions. The Conference did not carry out such ordinations, but senior 'brethren' did, sometimes in the missionary's cabin on the ship about to sail. The service was informal, though often (not always) accompanied by a letter which was a certificate of ordination. The reason seems to have been two-fold: frequently missionaries went out to their death, and such solemn prayer for their ministry seemed appropriate. But it is also likely that they needed a status which was parallel to that of Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries on the mission field.
107. With two exceptions, the various Methodist groups who separated from the Wesleyans from 1797 re-united with each other and/or ultimately in a single Conference to form the Methodist Church of Great Britain in 1932. That Church has continued to the present day, each Conference, under the hand of the President or a former president, with other appointed presbyters, ordaining its ministry of presbyters and latterly, deacons.
108. When the history of the Methodist societies since the death of John Wesley is examined below, it will be clear that the Methodist churches across the world universally accept the continuity or succession of ministry whereby those who have been given presbyteral authority ordain those who succeed them. This takes place in all cases within the oversight of the Conference.



*Francis Asbury 1745–1816*



*Thomas Coke 1747–1814*



*Richard Whatcoat 1736–1806*

## 8: Churches emerging from the British Methodist Tradition

109. Churches which have developed from mission originating with the British Methodist Church inherited at first a similar system of government. However, with the end of colonialism and the independence of new nations and of their churches, there has been a clear move towards establishing an episcopate adapted to local patterns of ministry. The earliest was in Kenya (1967), followed, in locally adapted ways, by Nigeria, Southern Africa, Ghana, Zimbabwe, The Gambia, and Tanzania (2012); some others retain the British pattern of a president. Bishops of the United Methodist Church and African-American Methodist Churches exist alongside some of these churches. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa is described in #116 as an example. In several of the former British Methodist churches, Anglican titles and forms of address, and canonical and liturgical dress have been adopted. In some churches, bishops do not retain their title after their period of appointment; in others, it continues as a courtesy.

### Episcopal ordering in American Methodism

110. We now turn to the other stream of world Methodism, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America and its successors.
111. The war of independence and the emergence of the newly United States after 1776 posed a pastoral problem for people of Anglican tradition in America. There were in fact two such groups: lay members of the Church of England living in the colonies, with their priests and deacons (there

was no resident bishop in America at the time), and members of the same Church who, as in the United Kingdom, were societies ‘in connexion with Mr Wesley’, otherwise known as ‘Methodists’. Independence from England meant the end of the jurisdiction of the British monarchy and its established (Anglican) church, for all its bishops had to swear an oath of allegiance to the crown. Earlier requests for a bishop or suffragan to be appointed to the American colonies had been resisted in America itself. The colonial oversight of the Bishop of London now ceased, and with it, the possibility of his appointing bishops for America. Many Anglican priests chose to return to England, or to go to Canada, exacerbating the pastoral crisis.

112. John Wesley attempted to convince the Bishop of London that there was need of bishops and priests in the United States, but partly through the bishop’s reluctance to act, and partly because he had no jurisdiction to do so, Wesley’s petitions failed. (The ‘non-Methodist’ Anglicans were in the same dilemma. They pursued various channels for the consecration of the candidate they had chosen in 1783, Samuel Seabury, who was made a bishop in Aberdeen by the Episcopal Church of Scotland in November 1784. In August 1785, his position was accepted by his American congregations, and Anglican ordinations commenced for America.)
113. John Wesley understood the lack of pastoral provision for Methodists in America to constitute an emergency to a degree that justified a break in canonical practice as had occasionally occurred in the early church. His studies led him to believe that presbyters (priests) and bishops were anciently of one order, and that at some times and in some places (he cited Alexandria in Egypt) presbyters

without a bishop elected and made one of their number a bishop to take pastoral charge. Wesley believed that the best churches in the world were episcopally ordered. Those who had administered the sacraments among the Methodist peoples until this time were always ordained presbyters. He came to the conclusion that in this new situation – a new church for a new nation – he was a ‘scriptural *episkopos*’ and could act. He was facing a ‘case of necessity’, and since the Methodist people were his responsibility, he *must* act.

114. In any case, after much thought, and in the face of opposition from some of his Methodist colleagues and from Anglican colleagues including his brother Charles (who believed that any such act amounted to schism), on 1 September 1784, with the assistance of Dr Thomas Coke and James Creighton, both Anglican priests, he ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey deacons. The next day, he ordained them elders (a translation of the Greek word *presbuteros*, priest or presbyter). He then set aside, with Creighton’s and Whatcoat’s assistance, Thomas Coke to be ‘superintendent’ (a translation of the Greek word *episkopos*, bishop) for the Methodist societies in America. In a letter he sent with Coke, he explained his intention and bade the ‘brethren’ similarly to ‘set aside’, through Dr Coke, a lay preacher called Francis Asbury who was already a significant leader in the hiatus following independence. This happened at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784.
115. The episcopacy thus came to American Methodism with its beginning as a Church. Although John Wesley named Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury to be superintendents of the new Church in the former colonies following the war for independence,

Francis Asbury understood the democratic sentiment of the newly forming nation better than Wesley or Coke did. He insisted on being elected by the preachers as superintendent rather than simply accepting appointment to that position from Wesley. Although they used the title bishop, the apparent understanding of the preachers as well as Asbury was that the superintendent was not of a higher order but was one of the elders chosen from among them to carry out the function of appointing the rest. Asbury established the model for American Methodism of a bishop appointing itinerant ministers to go where they were needed for mission. In the earliest years, such a travelling ministry was dangerous and difficult, as evidenced by the expression ‘worn out preacher’ for one who was superannuated. Asbury himself travelled many thousands of miles as he superintended the vast area that Methodism reached in North America.

116. Although Asbury had understood his episcopacy to require his own constant itinerancy in order to superintend the whole, by 1824, there were five bishops covering seventeen annual conferences. The original idea had been that bishops would exchange conferences every few years and thus carry out ‘general’ superintendency, but this practice never took hold. Instead, bishops became associated with areas and appointed preachers within those areas. In this way, American Methodist polity came to resemble a diocesan model, although conferences are somewhat different from dioceses in that they have in some instances a more direct responsibility for oversight.
117. Travelling preachers served the frontier well because they could go where the people were going. Over time, as the population became more settled,

### **Example: Episcopacy in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa**

The discussion began in 1985 with the suggestion of a change of title of the Chairman of District to Bishop and that of the President of Conference to Presiding Bishop, but a period of study and discussion of the issues and implications ensued across all levels of the church. A commission in 1988 offered a report entitled *The Rationale for and the Nature and Ecumenical Implications of Bishops in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*.

The following points (among others) were made. It had become evident that the role of the Chairman, originally administrative, was now acquiring a broader connotation. '(The Chairman's) real significance in the life of the Church is considerable and rests upon moral authority. An effective Chairman exercises a pastoral ministry towards his sisters and brethren in the ministry; ...is consulted on all manner of issues by ministers and members and often helps to resolve local problems by mediation and advice;... influences the ongoing work; and his initiative and example can have a profound effect upon the life of the Church in his District'(I.I.I.). This was increasingly recognized as an episcopal role. To adopt this title 'would recognize this without increasing his powers'.

It was noted that bishop is a scriptural title, and not one derived from secular practice, and was thus more clearly understood to belong to the church. Looking beyond Southern Africa, 'the title is used in the vast majority of Methodist Churches throughout the world. American Methodism has been episcopal since its beginning. Churches of British origin, such as Kenya and Nigeria, adopted the title of Bishop when they became independent'(I.I.3). Another section refers to the composition of the World Methodist Council of the time: 'of the 73 Methodist Churches around the world, less than half a dozen retain the British titles of President and Chairman. All the others have a form of episcopacy'.

This decision, however, 'does not imply that episcopacy is essential to the apostolicity of the Church or that the legitimacy of the ordained ministry depends upon the episcopate. Furthermore, Methodist bishops would not be in the historic succession which is treasured by the Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican traditions. In this respect they would be in the same position as the other Methodist and most Lutheran bishops'(I.I.4). Because the Methodist bishops would not be in the historic succession, the report continued, the ecumenical implications would be minimal, so its integration would not compromise the Methodist position, nor call into question the reality of the Methodist ministry. 'It would have symbolic value in linking Methodism even more closely to the universal Church through the ages and would be of immense value in relationships with episcopal churches.' It was added that the change 'does not threaten the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers any more than the existence of ordained ministers and the present office of Chairman'(I.I.6). (In 1985, the Conference had turned away from the possibility of seeking a link with the historic succession.) Much more followed, defining various functions and authority. The recommendations were accepted and implemented from 1989.

Methodist preachers travelled less and spent longer periods of time in one place. This more settled system also reinforced resemblance to a diocesan model.

118. Although the episcopacy has served American Methodism well, it has not always been universally endorsed. Only twelve years after Asbury's death, the Methodist Protestant Church split from the Methodist Episcopal Church and organized itself with a more congregational polity led by a president. Opposition to episcopacy was also one of the reasons (along with slavery) for the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in 1842, later to become the Wesleyan Methodist Church.
119. Such non-episcopal organization, though, has been quite limited in the American context. The United Methodist Church, all five predominantly African-American Methodist Churches (African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the African Union Methodist Protestant Church, and the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church), and the Free Methodist Church have episcopal leadership. The Church of the Nazarene and the Wesleyan Church have general superintendents.
120. The United Methodist Church, which is the result of three mergers - the merger of three Methodist bodies in 1939, to form the Methodist Church; the merger of the Evangelical Association with the United Brethren in 1946, to form the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB); and the merger of the Methodist Church with the Evangelical United Brethren - has lost the word episcopal from its name, but it has had continuous episcopacy going

back to Asbury and Coke through its predecessor bodies, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The United Methodist Church in the United States has lifetime episcopacy, but central conferences of the UMC outside the United States elect bishops for terms. All bishops, active or retired, serve on the Council of Bishops. Occasionally, this Council speaks to the Church through pastoral letters or position papers, but it cannot speak for the Church. The task of making policy, and thus speaking for the Church, lies only with the General Conference.

## 9: Churches deriving from the American Methodist context

121. We take as an example outside the United Methodist Church the practice of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, which has adapted the tradition of *episcope* it received from American Methodism, but is independent of it.



*Wesley Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur*

### **Example: General Conference, episcopacy, and presidency in the Methodist Church in Malaysia**

The Methodist churches in Malaysia trace their episcopal succession from the United Methodist Church, but with local adaptations. In 1888, the Rev. J. M. Thoburn was appointed by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (as it then was) as missionary bishop for the whole region stretching from Karachi to Singapore. In 1928, Bishop Edwin F. Lee was appointed Presiding Bishop of the Singapore-Manila area. Episcopacy has continued to this day by successive ordinations by Methodist bishops duly elected and consecrated.

Today, there are six annual conferences in the Malaysia region, and a General Conference. The Bishop presides as chief pastor and episcopal head of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, chairing the General Conference. Each of the annual conferences has a president (as in other Methodist churches), and there are also district superintendents to assist the presidents. The life of the Church is governed by a *Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church in Malaysia*, which declares,

The Bishop and the Presidents are called to share in the superintendency and leadership of the Church through their respective roles in the General and Annual Conferences. The interdependence of the offices calls for a collegiate style of leadership, which at the same time requires that the distinct role of each be respected by the other.<sup>1</sup>

Among the key roles of the Bishop are the presidency of the General Conference and some associated roles (e.g. its Executive Council and the Council of Presidents); the Bishop decides questions of law as they arise at General Conference; oversees the spiritual and connectional affairs of the Church, and particularly leads the Church in its mission of witness and service in the world; guards, transmits, teaches, and proclaims, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in scripture and tradition, and, as led and endowed by the Spirit, interprets that faith evangelically and prophetically; consecrates bishops, installs presidents, ordains elders and deacons and sees that the names of the persons ordained, and consecrated by him are entered in the journals of the Annual Conferences, and that proper credentials be furnished to these persons.

The presidents exercise equivalent oversight in their conferences and regions, but the Bishop presides at all ordinations, assisted by the president and district superintendents.

<sup>1</sup> (†366.5, *Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church in Malaysia* 2008)

In pondering all the accounts above of the developments in our two Methodist traditions (British and American), we might make our own the words of a 1937 report to the British Methodist Conference (in the language of their time).

Nevertheless, the Word of Life has been transmitted by a multitude of ministries, known and unknown, remembered or forgotten. We humbly acknowledge that our present fellowship derives from those who have been our fathers in God, and we acknowledge our debt to the Church of the past which has endured from one generation to another, by the power of Him who would not suffer it to be destroyed by assaults from without or faithlessness within. We give thanks to Him that, even in the days of its feebleness and faithlessness, the Word and Sacraments of His Church have never been wholly without power, and that men have been continually ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>2</sup> The Nature of the Christian Church, 1937 in Statements and reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order, Volume 1, 1933-1983, Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 2000, p. 22



*Lovely Lane Chapel, Baltimore, USA, site of the Christmas Conference of 1784. John Wesley had reluctantly agreed to the American Methodists' desire to organize their own church. He sent Thomas Coke to supervise the process and to consecrate Francis Asbury as "general superintendent" of the Methodists in America*

## Conclusion

122. Both our traditions have understood that oversight (*episcopate*) is required to preserve and transmit the apostolic faith, and each can recognize in the other the way that *episcopate* has functioned to help the church in its faithfulness. Local adaptation has historically been necessary for the churches to have the oversight they needed for this task.
123. We conclude, in light of everything that we have learned about each other, that there are no church-dividing differences between us in faith, in ordered ministry, in the succession of such ministries, and in the value of episcopacy. Each pair of local churches which seek unity in mission will consider the particular differences they have inherited, but these broad issues may be regarded as no longer separating us.
124. To be plain, only one thing remains for churches in our two traditions in order to manifest our unity in Jesus Christ through the interchangeability of ordained ministry, namely for Methodists and Anglicans to come together under the sign of the historic episcopate, for that represents the larger history of transmission of which Methodist Churches are already a part.
125. Episcopacy and succession are already an integral part of Methodism. By deciding to share in this sign, Methodists would be acting for the sake of that unity in mission which belongs to the wholeness of the Church. Repeated Anglican assurances, cited in this report, of full respect for Methodist ordained ministries show that Anglicans are also seeking a wholeness of the Church that neither they nor Methodists can have in separation.
126. Anglicans and Methodists in the United States have stated:
- Our hope of progress is grounded in the fact that Anglicans and Methodists... have not, as churches, called into question the faith, the ministerial orders, or the sacraments of the other church. We believe that we can move forward on the basis of the grace-given gift that we are not working from a point of disunity that involved any formal or corporate anathemas or excommunications or other formal assertions or declarations of disunity. Our two communions have already declared publicly, as churches, that we recognize each other as part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church in which the Gospel is rightly preached.<sup>52</sup>
127. Both our traditions recognize that our separation has diminished each of us, and that there are memories over generations to be healed and forgiven. A change of attitude will be needed on both sides, reaching deeply into each of us, nothing less than a true *metanoia*, a penitent change of direction, away from sinful suspicion and prejudice, towards the forgiving Christ. By this small but costly step, the world will be helped to believe. We give thanks that God is already bringing our communions to just such *metanoia*, and we gratefully present what we have learned about the ways in which the Holy Spirit is working through our dialogues with one another to heal the wounds of division.
- <sup>52</sup>Introduction, Theological Foundation paper TEC/UMC



## 10: Recommendations

128. The following recommendations were made.

### AMICUM:

1. requests the World Methodist Council and the Anglican Consultative Council to commend this report to their member churches for study, action and response.
2. in particular, requests the Councils to invite those churches which are considering moving into a relationship of communion to study and learn from the examples and precedents noted in Part 2, Sections 1-5 (#135-200) of this report, and to invite all churches to make use of the suggestions in the **Tool Kits** of this report.
3. requests the World Methodist Council and the Anglican Consultative Council to establish an Anglican–Methodist International Coordinating Committee to oversee and foster relationships between Methodist and Anglican member churches, with the following mandate:
  - a. to monitor and advise upon the development of Anglican–Methodist relations around the world, giving attention to their consistency with each other and with the self-understanding of the two communions,
  - b. to act as a catalyst for the development of Methodist and Anglican relations, and in particular for agreements of communion where these do not yet exist,
  - c. to encourage the growth of joint life and mission, especially where there are established agreements,
  - d. to arrange theological consultation as appropriate,
  - e. to reflect on the responses to this report received from the member churches of the two communions, and
  - f. to report on a regular basis to the two Councils.
4. requests each Council to appoint 5 members representing the breadth of their respective communions, with appropriate expertise, and to invite ecumenical participation in the committee as appropriate



## II: Agreements in the area of ordained ministry

129. At the end of our considerations the Commission believed it would be helpful to state, in brief summary form, a series of assertions regarding ordained ministry on which we fully agreed. They are not intended to summarize the report as a whole, beginning as it does with the mission of Jesus, and the apostolic calling of the whole Church (as the first of these points below state). They may give a starting point, however, to local groups as they begin to open up the challenges of the report as a whole.
- a. The whole Church is called to participate in the redemptive mission of God in Christ for the healing of God's creation.
  - g. The gifts of ministry of the whole people of God are given to enable the Church to continue the mission of Jesus Christ.
  - h. A common, interchangeable ordained ministry is crucial in making the intrinsic unity of the Church visible.
  - i. In various agreements, churches of both our traditions have formally affirmed the ecclesial authenticity of the ministries of word, sacrament and oversight in each other's churches.
  - j. Both of our traditions worldwide include diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal forms of ordained ministry.
  - k. Personal, collegial and communal forms of oversight (*episcopate*) are practised in all of our churches, particularly in the forms of 'bishop in synod' and the Connexional principle.
  - l. Both of our traditions make it clear that they intend to ordain to the ministry of the universal Church and in continuity with the ministry of the apostles.
  - m. The orderly transmission of ordained ministry embodies the truth that we do not take ministry upon ourselves, but receive it from Christ through the Church.
  - n. In both Anglican and Methodist traditions, the orderly transmission of ordained ministry is a visible sign of historical continuity.
  - o. The orderly transmission of ordained ministry in Methodism takes place under the discipline of the Conference, while for Anglicans, 'the historic episcopate' plays a key role.
  - p. The 'historic episcopate' is a visible sign of the apostolic continuity of the Church which is exemplified in many ways in both of our communions.
  - q. Episcopal succession and the oversight of the Conference serve as signs of our churches' intention to remain faithful to the mission of the apostles, not as guarantees that they will always faithfully pass on the apostolic faith.

- r. There have been times in the history of the Church when, for reasons of mission, a break in historic continuity with regard to ordination by bishops occurred, even though the intention of those concerned was to perpetuate the Church's historic ministry.
- s. Methodist and Anglican churches entering a relationship of communion will be committed to a future that includes episcopal ordination in historical continuity.
- t. Certain anomalies may be bearable as the churches concerned enter into deeper unity over time.
- u. Any agreement for communion between Methodist and Anglican churches will honour the ecclesial integrity of ministerial orders in both churches.
- v. The interchangeability of ministries does not require that presbyters have previously been ordained as deacons.
- w. A common understanding of the diaconate is not an essential requirement for churches to enter into communion. However, the diaconate is currently being re-envisioned in both our traditions.

## 12: Biblical reflection

### The radical nature of Jesus' ministry as mandate for mission

130. In St Luke's Gospel Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God involves healing, teaching, advocating justice, exercising prophetic ministry in the context of an inclusive community, and eating with sinners. Recent Biblical scholarship points to the fact that *sinners* are those who did not study Torah in the same way as the Pharisaic community. Jesus is said to have preached good news to sinners, outcasts and women (Lk 8.48); all were welcomed into the new community of faith he came to establish. This community was made up of the blind, the lame, the lepers, the poor, those with wealth, and women. John, who was arrested, when he heard about Jesus' work wanted to know if Jesus was the messiah. John's disciples, who made the request on his behalf, were advised to 'go and tell John what you have seen and heard' (Lk 7.22). That is, Jesus' mission is expressed in practical terms wherever people's lives are transformed, especially in situations where the poor have good news preached to them (Lk 14.21-23). Jesus was sent by God into this ministry and Jesus sends the Church to carry on the ministry of bringing those on the margins or fringes of society into the Kingdom (Lk 24.47). Based on the above, Jesus' ministry can be viewed in four ways.
131. First, *Jesus' mission is God's mission*. Jesus is sent by God into mission (Lk 4.18-19); he preaches the Kingdom of God with authority (Lk 4.32); he commands unclean spirits with authority and power (Lk 4.36) he sends the apostles (Lk 9.1-2) and the seventy (Lk 10.1) into mission. In the end, when the mission is complete, Jesus will hand over the Kingdom to God (Heb 1.13-14; 1 Cor 15.24-28).
132. Second, *Jesus' mission is filled with the Holy Spirit*. Jesus' mission is Spirit-filled in that the Holy Spirit, which was promised to Israel and all nations (Joel 2.28, Lk 24.49; Acts 1.8), was poured out on Mary at the incarnation of Jesus (Lk 1.35), was present at his baptism (Lk 3.22), drove him into the wilderness (Lk 4.1), affirmed his ministry in his hometown (Lk 4.18) and is present with him throughout his ministry (Lk 4). The outpouring (gift) of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost on all nations with different languages (Acts 2.1-12) continues throughout the life of the Church. Proclamation of the Kingdom through the Church emerged at Pentecost with Peter, James, Stephen, Matthias and Philip. Along with the proclamation arose deeds such as prayer, casting lots and laying-on of hands for healing, as well as setting people apart for mission (Acts 5.6). Out of these deeds forms of ministry emerged in the Church. For example, serving at table in Acts 6 is a function of ministry emerging from the crisis of feeding the poor. The word deacon emerged from the exercise of ministry in its broadest sense. Almsgiving or taking care of the poor as in the case of the seven deacons (Acts 6), or in the case of Dorcas who was raised by Peter (Acts 9.36ff) are all expressions of ministry. Even before Dorcas some women ministered to Jesus based on their wealth (Lk 7.37-39; 8.2-3). Similarly, Peter and James carried the apostolic ministry which later evolved into the ministry of oversight (*episcopate*). All of these expressions of ministry point to the movement of the Spirit in the evolution of Jesus' mission.

133. Third, *the Apostles' mission reflects differences in views and practice in the Church after the Ascension* (Acts 14.1-2; Acts 15; Gal 2.1-10). Conflicts existed within the early Christian community, especially in relation to circumcision, as well as other social, cultural and religious issues (Acts 14.14ff). In this respect, overseers were consulted concerning membership within the Christian community (Acts 15.4). Early leadership evolved to deal with the conflicts. Apostles and elders were consulted in order to resolve the conflict (Acts 15.6). The Jerusalem conference was called to settle the differences concerning circumcision and other matters concerning dietary rules (Acts 15.20). Similarly, the Church as it evolves needs to take into consideration various cultural and religious pluralisms. In other words, there is a need to engage in modern mission through taking seriously the reality of pluralism, whether religious or secular, in various contexts.

134. Finally, *Jesus' mission is first of all to the poor*. Giving priority to the poor is critical for understanding Jesus' mission as good news as well as the manifestation of God's rule or Kingdom of God. The poor are with us always, whether in spiritual (Mt 5.3) or socio-economic terms (Lk 6.20; 7.22). They are blessed not because they are poor but because a new era of good news (reign of God) has come to them and they are included (Lk 7.22). This inclusion is highlighted in Mary's song which is often referred to as the Magnificat (Lk 1.52-53). Here the song suggests priority is given to those who are lowly and poor. Those who are mighty have their status lowered while the poor are given pride of place in the Kingdom Jesus established. Mission to the poor is therefore consistent with the mission

highlighted in Galatians 2, with Paul being sent to the poor in Jerusalem. Similarly, the Church that is faithful to the gospel gives priority to the place of the poor as central to proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

# Part Two

## Monitoring Dialogues



## Introduction

### How have Anglican and Methodist churches around the world proposed to share in the apostolic communion?

135. Part of the remit given to AMICUM relates to the monitoring dialogues and relationships between Anglican and Methodist churches worldwide, with the intention of
- listening to the challenges and opportunities offered in the variety of contexts;
  - gathering information and insights;
  - reviewing and evaluating agreements and theological statements; and
  - sharing the best practices learned.
136. The Commission sought to implement this part of its task by mapping relationships between Anglicans and Methodists around the world, but it quickly became evident that it would be impossible to conduct anything like a scientific or comprehensive investigation. The Commission sent out a survey form, which contained important questions pertaining to this work, to the leaders of the churches around the world, but the responses were uneven. What did become clear, however, is that there are a variety of different contexts in which relationships are worked out, and that it would be impossible in this report to contain details of all of them. What we have done, therefore, is to choose particular situations which inform each context, which will be presented with description and some analysis. We recognize that there are many others which cannot be fully presented here,
- but hope that the examples we have chosen will give some important perspectives.
137. The material has been broken up into different generic groups:
- The experience of united churches in the Indian sub-continent, exemplified by the Church of South India and the Church of North India.
  - The experience of situations in which Methodist and Anglican Churches are committed to bilateral agreements.
  - Other situations, such as places where a uniting/ united church is in conversations with an Anglican Church, or places where there are multilateral agreements.
  - Some historical precedents which may inform our thinking.
  - Places where there are no apparent structured bilateral or multilateral conversations.



## I: The Churches of South and North India

### Historical background

138. The Tranquebar Conference on Church Union in 1919 arose out of a desire for unity between the churches. The conference pointed out that witness was weakened by divisions 'for which we are not responsible, and which have been, as it were imposed upon us from without.'<sup>53</sup> The desire for union was further strengthened, and negotiations were hastened, by a combination of factors, chief among which were: growing nationalism among the church leaders; eagerness to present the Indian church as an indigenous church headed by national leadership; desire to establish a democratic form of church government; and a concern to evangelize the nation. The four denominational churches each contributed rich and varied traditions and heritage, and their fusion was seen as a dynamic impetus fostering fresh vitality in the church union movement and for the proclamation of the gospel, and an effective instrument in God's work, generating hope for greater peace, closer fellowship, fuller life within the church, and stronger, more credible mission. The negotiations for unity presented challenges in matters of Faith and Order, described below.

<sup>53</sup> *Forward to Union*, National Christian Council of India, Delhi, 1968, p.2

## The Church of South India

139. Ecumenical history was made in 1947 when the former Anglican and Methodist churches joined the South India United Church (a Presbyterian–Congregational union formed in 1908) to become the single Church of South India (CSI). The CSI was inaugurated on 27 September 1947, after many years of negotiations for union. At the time of inauguration there were 14 dioceses with one in Sri Lanka; today there are 22 dioceses spread all over South India. The most significant factor of the union is that it was not the beginning of something new but is a continuation of the rich traditions of four churches which are in union, acknowledging that they are all part of one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The great vision of unity is not directed towards the construction of something superficial but a move towards sharing of spiritual resources, collaboration in service to humanity, identifying and pursuing new structures to promote Christian unity.

### Episcopacy and existing orders

140. The united church undertook in its constitution to maintain the historic episcopate. Episcopacy is viewed as a link with the universal Church and a symbol of unity within the church; a motivating factor for the involvement of the church in God's mission. Episcopacy was accepted not because of the insistence of the Anglicans on the necessity of the episcopacy but because the non-episcopal partners keenly advocated it.
141. When the CSI was formed, the integration of non-episcopally ordained ministers into the episcopal churches presented a temporary difficulty.

A few proposals were made, such as re-ordination, a service of episcopal commissioning, mutual commissioning of all ministers and supplementary ordination, but all these proposals were rejected. Ultimately it was agreed to accept all the ordained ministers as they were to minister anywhere within the CSI, and those ministers ordained in non-episcopal churches continued with the ordination they had received without further reconciliation; but a pledge was given that none of them would be imposed upon a congregation and it was laid down that after 30 years the CSI should decide whether it would continue to allow exceptions to the rule of episcopal ordination. As a result, some thirty years had to elapse before the CSI was fully 'in communion' with Anglican churches worldwide. Clearly future unions, if they were to have immediate effect, needed to find a way to recognize all the previous ordained ministries of the partner churches.

### **Life in unity**

142. The CSI has overcome many denominational barriers and differences. The organic union of the church has been strengthened and consolidated under the leadership of successive moderators, bishops, presbyters and lay leaders.
143. Some difficulties have arisen from the local context and have affected the life of the church in a negative way, such as nominalism, consumerism, commercialization of the gift of grace, difference in diocesan constitutions, litigation within the church at all levels, inadequacy of administration and management in the face of such a large membership, some corruption, and a lack of zeal for evangelization.

144. Despite these difficulties, the four traditions have striven together to stay in the union with its episcopacy, its common liturgy, and its participation in political consciousness programmes for the empowerment and liberation of the poor, women, girl children and all those who are marginalized by society. The CSI has to work hard to make its witness and mission more effective in the midst of growing multiculturalism, multi-nationalism, and religious fundamentalism.

## The Church of North India

145. A negotiating committee for church union in North India was appointed and met at Calcutta in 1951 during which a proposed *Plan of Church Union* was drawn up. In 1965 this became the basis of the Church of North India (CNI), a union of the following six churches:

- The Council of the Baptist Church in Northern India
- The Church of the Brethren in India
- The Disciples of Christ
- The Church of India (also formerly known as the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon)
- The Methodist Church (British and Australian Conferences)
- The United Church of Northern India (formed in 1924 by the various Presbyterian and Congregational churches)

(Another partner in the process towards union, the Methodist Church of Southern Asia, derived its episcopate from the American Methodist tradition. It stressed the constitutional form of episcopacy, whereas the Anglicans treasured the historic continuity of its bishops from the early church. This difference was a considerable strain during the negotiations, and for this and other reasons, the MCSA did not continue to union.)

146. The inaugural service in Nagpur in 1970 was carefully planned to enact and underline the intentions and desires of the six uniting churches to live in full union, and to emphasize their trust in God's grace. Liturgy and symbolism combined

to offer a comprehensive presentation of the unity so far achieved, and the commitment of all those involved to work for the success of the union. The hitherto separate ministries were presented with the prayer that God would unite them into a single sacred ministry acceptable to all. Over the following few weeks, similar unification services across the CNI involved all the presbyters unable to attend the Nagpur inauguration.

### Episcopacy and existing orders

147. The CNI negotiators resolved to acknowledge both aspects of the episcopate. The episcopate of the Church of North India was to be both constitutional and historic. It would be constitutional because its bishops would be appointed and would perform their functions in accordance with the constitution of the Church. It would be historic, because it would have historic continuity with the early Church, but it would not be committed to any one particular theological interpretation of episcopacy. In contrast to the CSI, the CNI began as a single church with a reconciled ministry.

### The sacrament of baptism

148. There was a further difference of conscience in the understanding and practice of baptism among the negotiating churches, eventually overcome. The CNI would recognize both forms, infant dedication followed by baptism by immersion on profession of faith, and the baptism of infants, followed by confirmation at a later stage, while insisting that baptism occur only once.

## The ordination of women

149. It was resolved that the Church of North India would admit women into the ordained ministry, as deacons, presbyters and bishops. Today in many dioceses of the Church of North India women are part of the ordained ministry.



*Ireland: the consecration as an episcopal minister at the Methodist Conference on 11 June 2014 of its President, The Rev Peter Murray. Two Anglican Archbishops and Bishop Harold Miller were involved in the laying-on of hands.*

## 2: Churches with bilateral agreements between Methodists and Anglicans

### Ireland: The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland

#### Context

150. The Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland exist in the context of two political jurisdictions: in the Republic of Ireland, the context is largely Roman Catholic, and in Northern Ireland, the Protestant churches are dominated by a strong Presbyterianism. In both these settings, the two churches are minorities, even though the Church of Ireland was at one time the established church (up to 1870). Methodism is a great deal smaller than its Anglican counterpart, but probably has greater than expected influence, and is considered one of the four main churches.

#### Bilateral agreement

151. A tripartite commission, which also included the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, met from 1968; in 1988 the Presbyterians withdrew. Methodists and Anglicans then established a joint theological working party which worked from 1989. They developed a Covenant which was tested in the churches and signed in 2002.
152. The Covenant stated: 'We believe that God is calling our two churches to a fuller relationship in which we commit ourselves to share a common life and mission [and] to grow together so that unity may be visibly realized.' 'We look forward

to the time when our ministries can be fully interchangeable and our churches visibly united.' Commitment to common mission is spelled out in a number of concrete commitments: to share resources, encourage joint congregations in new church plants and, where local congregations so choose, joint chaplaincies. There are commitments to establish appropriate forms of consultation on matters of Faith and Order, mission and service, and to participate as observers by invitation in each other's forms of governance at every possible level. The Covenant is overseen by a Covenant Council.

#### Recognition of ministries

153. In the 2002 Covenant the two churches stated: 'We acknowledge each others' ordained ministries as given by God and as instruments of his grace by which our churches are served and built up'. It went on to say, 'As pilgrims together, we look forward to the time when our ministries can be fully interchangeable and our churches visibly united.'
154. Like British Methodism (with which indeed it is closely and historically intertwined), Methodism in Ireland has seen its Conference as the key agent of *episcopate* in the church, with *episcopate* being exercised generally in a corporate way. There have never been 'bishops' per se in British and Irish Methodism, unlike a great deal of the worldwide Methodist family. However, the Covenant Council in Ireland has noted that the president of the Conference exercises a personal *episcopate*, not least in relation to the presidential role in ordinations. It has also noted that, de facto, that role does not entirely disappear at the end of a presidential year. Former presidents are given a special role at the Conference, not least liturgically, and, should the president

in any particular year be unable to preside at the ordination, that role would be taken by a former president. This means that there is a continuing role. So it has been noted that personal *episcopate* is exercised in Irish Methodism by presidents of the Conference.

155. What is proposed is that the interchangeability of ministries would be brought about by Church of Ireland bishops being involved in the laying-on of hands in the installation and consecration of a president (who would be defined as and become an ‘episcopal minister’); and by Methodist presidents being involved in the laying-on of hands of Church of Ireland bishops at their consecration. The intention is that these two events in the initial stage would be as close as possible. After this, from a date declared, all presbyteral ministries in the two churches would be interchangeable. The first of these consecrations took place at the Methodist Conference on St Barnabas’ Day, 11 June 2014, when the two Archbishops and Bishop Harold Miller were involved in the laying-on of hands as the President was consecrated as an *episcopal minister*. Both churches are prepared to live with a period of anomaly. During this time, the validity of the orders of those ordained as presbyters or installed as president before the mutual participation in each others’ consecrations will be fully recognized and accepted in both churches. The churches retain their individual integrity and structures and those serving in a particular church do so under its authority.

156. In a bill prepared for the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in 2014, the following proposals were agreed:

Pursuant to the will of the Church of Ireland

to work towards the unity of all God’s people, and that its mission may be further strengthened, the Church of Ireland,

- a. recognizes all three expressions of personal, communal, and collegial *episcopate* in the polity of the Methodist Church in Ireland, in the person of the Methodist President and his or her predecessors and successors, in the Methodist congregations and in the Methodist Conference respectively;
- b. discerns consonance between the office and function of a bishop within the Church (as expressed in the Ordinal and the Preamble and Declaration) and in the office and function of a president and a past president within the Methodist Church in Ireland and understands that ‘Episcopal Minister’ gives expression to the office and function of Presidents and Past Presidents of the Methodist Church in Ireland;
- c. requires that at least two bishops of the Church participate in all future Installations and Consecrations of the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland;
- d. recognizes those who have been, at any time, installed and consecrated as a president in the Methodist Church in Ireland and who are in full Connexion with the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland, as being entitled to participate in the laying on of hands in the ordination of bishops and priests in the Church.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Bill proposed for the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2014, to amend Chapter IX of the Constitution. Note that ‘Church’ in this citation means the Church of Ireland.

157. As a result of this, Methodist presbyters may serve as presbyters in the Church of Ireland, and a president or former president may serve in an episcopal role in the Church of Ireland. Any presbyter or president so serving shall be subject to the discipline of the Church of Ireland while they are serving in it.
158. Both churches continue to explore the full meaning of the diaconal order/diaconal ministry and are committed to working together to explore further and strengthen its role and function.

## **England: The Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England**

### **Context**

159. The Methodist Church in Great Britain is present in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Gibraltar and Malta, while the Church of England is defined by the borders of England, with the exception of the Diocese of Gibraltar in Europe. Established by law, and with representation of bishops in the upper chamber of the British Parliament, the Church of England is the largest church in England, whereas the Methodist Church is the largest non-conformist church in Great Britain. Both churches are party to a number of ecumenical agreements, and the Methodist Church is also in a covenant relationship with the Church in Wales by virtue of a bilateral covenant with Baptists, Presbyterian and Reformed churches signed in 1975.
160. Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain began in

earnest as a result of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher's Cambridge University sermon in 1946, when he invited the free churches of Britain to consider taking episcopacy into their systems. The Methodist Church was open to considering this invitation and there followed a long and careful series of conversations resulting in a proposals for unity in the late 1960s. The proposals were supported by a majority in the Methodist Conference; however in both 1969 and 1972 the proposals failed to achieve the required majority in the General Synod of the Church of England, despite receiving strong support from the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey. Consequently, the conversations that resulted in a covenant relationship between the two churches have to be understood as part of a healing of memories, both old and more recent.

### **Bilateral agreement**

161. On the feast of All Saints 2003 the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain entered into a Covenant commitment developed during formal conversations which led to the publication of a common statement in December 2000. This followed the work of a series of informal conversations held in 1995 and 1996 which identified a common understanding of the goal of visible unity, and a wide experience of working together locally, especially in local ecumenical partnerships.
162. The common statement sets down what the two churches agree in faith; their shared understanding of the nature of visible unity; mutual acknowledgements and commitments to each other; and the identification of the next steps to be

taken. The Covenant affirms that both churches are true churches belonging to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, and that they truly participate in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God; that in both churches the word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist are duly administered and celebrated; and that both churches confess in word and life the apostolic faith revealed in the holy scriptures and set forth in the ecumenical creeds.

163. The Covenant puts the two churches on a path of ever deepening relationships and mutual trust, and cooperation on the road to a richer unity involving all who call themselves Christ's disciples. Both churches have, in signing the Covenant committed themselves 'as a priority, to work to overcome the remaining obstacles to the organic unity of our two churches, on the way to the full visible unity of Christ's church. In particular, we look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible a united, interchangeable ministry', and 'to realize more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our traditions, taking steps to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service in our needy world.' A Joint Implementation Commission has been in place since 2003 with the task of monitoring and promoting the implementation of the Covenant.

### Recognition of ministries

164. The Covenant affirms that each church acknowledges:
- that the other's ordained and lay ministries are given by God as instruments of God's grace, to

build up the people of God in faith, hope and love, for the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care and to share in God's mission in the world;

- that the other's ordained ministries possess both the inward call of the Holy Spirit and Christ's commission given through the Church;
- that both churches embody the conciliar, connexional nature of the Church and that communal, collegial and personal oversight (*episcopate*) is exercised within them in various forms; and
- that there already exists a basis for agreement on the principles of episcopal oversight as a visible sign and instrument of the communion of the Church in time and space.

It is not surprising therefore that both Churches commit themselves 'to continue to develop structures of joint or shared communal, collegial and personal oversight, including shared consultation and decision-making, on the way to a fully united ministry of oversight.'

165. Under the Covenant, the Joint Implementation Commission has made a proposal for the Methodist Church to incorporate the historic episcopate into its ministry. Essentially each successive president of Conference be ordained within the historic episcopate, as a president-bishop, so that future Methodist deacons, presbyters and bishops will be episcopally ordained, thus making possible a progressively interchangeable ministry with that of the Church of England and bringing about a collegial unity in oversight involving both churches – bishops in communion. The argument of the report involves three steps.

166. First, the British Methodist Conference is widely seen by Methodists as the *corporate bishop* of the Methodist Church. The Conference carries out responsibilities that, in an episcopally ordered church, fall to the bishops: teaching, ordaining, deploying ministers and exercising discipline to ensure that the church is ordered in its worship and mission to remain true to the gospel, the Christian tradition and the promptings of the Spirit in a changing world. Methodists and Anglicans alike can recognize that the Conference embodies oversight (*episcopate*) for the British Methodist Church.
167. Second, the president of the Conference, who is always a presbyter, exercises the highest form of personal *episcopate* (oversight) to be found within the Connexion. The president is entrusted with unique responsibilities, notably presiding at ordinations on behalf of the Conference. The presidency of the Conference models the partnership between ordained and lay Christians in church leadership. The president and vice-president work closely together in ways that are appropriate to their callings as presbyter and lay person (or deacon) respectively.
168. Third, the Methodist Church is a Connexion, that is to say a single unit of oversight, in the way that the Church of England, with its forty-four dioceses, is not. Therefore, the proposal argues that it would be ecclesologically entirely appropriate for a president-bishop to exercise an episcopal ministry throughout the whole Methodist Connexion. Whether the president-bishop served as president for a year (the current practice) or for more than a year, in a relatively short time a small college of president- and past president-bishops would be built up. After serving their presidential term they would be deployed by the Conference within the Connexion, combining ministry in their station with a wider episcopal ministry.

## The United States: The Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church

### Context

169. The dialogue in the United States between The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church has been informed by their common history as two groups of Anglicans that adapted in different ways to the way the war for independence ended the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London over the former colonies. Each tradition found a way to resume episcopal leadership, although they did so in different ways.
170. Both these dialogue partners also have important relationships with the historic black Methodist churches – the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church – and these have participated in the conversations. Questions of race and racism are lively ones for all American churches. The particular histories of Methodists and Episcopalians require the churches to address these.

### Bilateral agreement

In the United States, the Methodist-Episcopal dialogue in the 1950s was curtailed as both The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church were committed to multilateral dialogue in the Consultation on Church Union. Partially as a result of the success of the Anglican-Methodist International Dialogue in the 1990s, a bilateral dialogue between the two churches

began to meet in 2002.<sup>55</sup>

171. Although The United Methodist Church is the result of a merger and so has a history of ‘organic union,’ the goal of the dialogue with The Episcopal Church is ‘full communion,’ defined as

a relationship between two distinct ecclesiastical bodies in which each maintains its own autonomy while recognizing the catholicity and apostolicity of the other, and believing the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith. In such a relationship, communicant members of each would be able freely to communicate at the altar of the other, and ordained ministers may officiate sacramentally in either church. Specifically, this includes transferability of members, mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries, mutual enrichment by one another’s traditions of hymnody and patterns of liturgy, freedom to participate in each other’s ordinations and installations of clergy, including bishops, and structures for consultation to express, strengthen, and enable our common life, witness, and service, to the glory of God and the salvation of the world.<sup>56</sup>

This is not a proposal for a merger. ‘Each will retain its autonomy, and its current structures, precedents, and practices, except at very specific points noted in this report where, for the sake of unity in mission,

<sup>55</sup> Episcopal-United Methodist Dialogue Team (eds), *A Theological Foundation for Full Communion between The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church* (2010), p 10

<sup>56</sup> op. cit, Introduction

specific practices may be altered on the part of one or both churches.<sup>57</sup>

172. The two churches are currently in a relationship of Interim Eucharist Sharing established in 2006. During this time, the churches are asked to consider *A Theological Foundation for Full Communion between The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church* (2010) written by the Episcopal-United Methodist Dialogue Team.

### Recognition of ministries

Our two communions have already declared publicly, as churches, that we recognize each other as part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church in which the Gospel is rightly preached.<sup>58</sup>

173. The *Theological Foundation* makes a series of affirmations about common faith:

Our quest for full communion is grounded in our calling to mission today, and we recognize that our current state of visible division is a hindrance to our mission.

The manner of the reconciliation of the two episcopacies is still a matter of discussion and study. As part of this discussion, it is our hope that with regards to a future reconciliation of episcopal ministries, Episcopalians and United Methodists affirm the following:

- Our journey toward full communion must include a way to recognize and reconcile the two episcopacies in such a manner as not to call into question the authenticity of each other's ordinations.
- Both churches affirm the historic episcopate, in the language of the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* statement, as a 'sign, but not a guarantee, of the catholicity, unity, and continuity of the church.'
- Both churches agree that the historic episcopate is always in a process of reform in the service of the Gospel.
- From their formative periods in the colonial age both churches locally adapted the historic episcopate for the sake of mission.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> op. cit., p 8

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> op. cit., pp. 31–32



*The Revd Prof Robert Gribben, Co-Chair of AMICUM, addressing Mt Pisgah CME Zion Church, Baltimore, USA. Bishop Hoyt sitting under the flag.*

## **African-American Methodism**

The historic African-American Methodist churches in the United States have been in dialogue with both The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church through Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC). A major question in these dialogues is what race means for the unity of the church.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was formed because of an act of racial discrimination. At St Georges Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, black worshippers were segregated from whites. After Richard Allen and some others sat in the 'wrong' seats, trustees tried to physically remove them by pulling them off their knees while they were praying.

In the context of slavery, Christian faith became very important to many black people because even though their bodies belonged to their white masters, their minds could belong to Jesus. They were told daily that they were disposable, but when the preacher proclaimed hope, he was bearing truly good news even in dehumanizing situations.

Not only the history of slavery, but also current conditions of inequality, such as massive incarceration of African Americans, make it impossible to talk about matters of Faith and Order without also talking about matters of justice. The presence of these churches in dialogue is an important reminder of the link between unity and mission.

At its 2000 General Conference, The United Methodist Church participated in an Act of Repentance for Racism, asking forgiveness from the African Methodist (Pan-Methodist) churches. This act opened the way for further reconciliation. At its 2012 General Conference, The United Methodist Church passed a resolution of full communion with these churches. This Pan-Methodist agreement creates a new and healing relationship among Methodists long divided from one another.



*Waitangi Treaty House, North Island, Aotearoa-New Zealand*

## Aotearoa-New Zealand and Polynesia: The Methodist Church of New Zealand and the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

### Context

174. Anglicans (1814) and Methodists (1822) were early arrivals in the colonial period in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and their missions began and continued in harmony. Their respective missionaries were crucial contributors to New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi (1840), establishing relationships between Pakeha (settlers) and Maori peoples. Out of this history, the churches in the latter part of the 20th century have developed unique ecclesial models – the three-tikanga partnership of the Anglican Church (Pakeha/Maori/Polynesia), and the bicultural partnership of the Methodist Church (Maori/Tauiwi).
175. Proposals for church union in New Zealand arose as early as 1903 (Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches). In 1948 a more substantial attempt at union was initiated with a Basis of Union between the same three churches, later to be joined by the Associated Church of Christ in 1956, and the Anglican Church in 1964. In 1965 a Joint Commission for Church Union between the five negotiating churches was established, producing an Act of Commitment in 1967 and a final Plan for Union in 1971. At each stage, the Methodists tended to support it strongly, while the Anglican Church did not. The final vote for union faltered in 1981. In the intervening years, while local churches waited for the national union, local Union parishes and Cooperating Venture

parishes became established and remain a substantial part of the church landscape in New Zealand.

### Bilateral agreement

176. The journey towards a bilateral covenant was initiated in 1996 as the joint churches sought to respond to the ACC/WMC document *Sharing in the Apostolic Communion*. Joint conversations became the first phase of dialogue. The progress towards the Covenants in England and in Ireland provided impetus towards a second phase of conversations from 2002.
177. In 2008, the two churches adopted a Covenant, formally signed in the context of a combined worship service in Auckland 2009. Our unity was symbolized by holding the first part of the service in a Tongan Methodist church, and then processing literally across the road to a Maori Anglican church for the remainder of the service.
178. The Covenant stated:
- Our vision at this time is one of visible unity. We are not sure at this time what this would look like, or what its implications might be for our two churches ('What we will be has not yet been revealed.' 1 John 3.2). We see this search as a journey in keeping with the model of Unity by Stages already affirmed by our two churches. We do not see one church absorbing another, or the extinguishing of any of the existing identities within our churches. The treasures all bring are to be preserved (e.g. spiritualities, cultural identities). We seek a visible unity for our two churches that receives and cherishes all

the gifts, all the insights, and all the treasures,  
and holds them together in a creative way  
that serves God's mission in the world.<sup>60</sup>

179. Ongoing dialogue will seek 'to realize more deeply our common life and mission and to share the distinctive contributions of our traditions, taking steps to bring about closer collaboration in all areas of witness and service in the world.'<sup>61</sup>

### **Recognition of ministries**

180. A third phase of dialogue based on the Covenant arose in 2011. The key focus for the current dialogue is achieving the interchangeability of ordained ministry of presbyter/priest so as to express more fully the visible unity of the two churches. This builds on the Covenant's acknowledgement that the ministry of each of the two churches is a real ministry of Word and sacrament, the apostolic content in the ordained ministry of each of the churches, and that each church exercises a ministry of *episcopate*. The hope is that specific proposals will be brought to the churches in 2014, based chiefly on the Irish model explored from the local context of Aotearoa-New Zealand.

60 Anglican Methodist Covenant 2008, Introduction  
61 op. cit, Commitment #2

### **3: Other agreements between Anglicans and Methodist Churches – United-Uniting or multilateral**

#### **Australia: The Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia**

181. Dialogue towards mutual recognition of (ordained) ministries began as early as 1977, when the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches united. A report, *For the Sake of the Gospel*, was not produced until 2001 and received very qualified acceptance, but commitment to further conversation. That report had been based on a four-stage set of types or levels of agreement of Australian Anglican origin, the first being a Covenant of Co-operation, the second an Agreement on Essentials of Faith and Ministry, a third stage called 'a Covenant of Association and Intercommunion, warranting interim eucharistic sharing', the final being full organic union. The third stage was pursued but the Anglican General Synod did not endorse the word 'Intercommunion' and the process stalled. The dialogue began again, and in 2009 submitted a 'Covenant of Association' much shorter than the first proposal, consisting of a number of affirmations and commitments, drawing on similar work in the two churches in New Zealand. The Anglican General Synod welcomed the report and sent it to the dioceses and its Doctrine Commission, but in fact it was not well received, and the proposal was not brought to the national Assembly of the Uniting Church. Anglican leaders then proposed that the dialogue move in a different direction.

182. The efforts in 2012 to renew the dialogue and try to 'develop a national framework for local Covenants of Co-operation' received a positive response from the both churches. This led to the establishment of a reconstituted Joint Working Group. This group, consisting of eight members, met on seven occasions. The objective, less ambitious than a Covenant of Association, was a national agreement, serving as a framework for the many local agreements between the two churches across Australia. A report with recommendations was sent to the Anglican General Synod and the Uniting Church National Assembly early in 2014. The former is scheduled to meet in 2014, the latter in 2015.

#### **Canada: The Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada**

##### **Context**

183. Anglicans made attempts in the 19th century to become the established church in the colonies, but this was resisted by the other churches. The United Church of Canada was a merger in 1925 of Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists (later to include Disciples) and was an attempt to be 'the Church in Canada'. They are respectively the third and second largest denominations in Canada (after Roman Catholics) and they are both in numerical decline. Both churches have become deeply aware of their entanglement with the colonizing project of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries that inflicted great pain on the indigenous First Nations of Canada. Wrestling particularly with the legacy of the residential schools, which the churches ran on behalf of the government, has engaged them in a process of truth and reconciliation with First Nations people and has led to intense debate about gospel and culture.

**Bilateral agreement**

184. In the 1960s there was a move to organic union between the Anglicans and the United Church. The Plan of Union was studied and debated widely, but in the end the Anglican House of Bishops voted against it in 1975. This left a long and bitter memory for United Church people. Interestingly, one of the key reasons that the Anglicans were opposed was because they would have to accept the ordination of women, yet they approved the ordination of women the same year.
185. In expectation of the union, many congregations, especially in the less populated west and north, had formed joint congregations. These 'ecumenical shared ministries', which sometimes included more partners (Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian), have a life of their own and the participating churches support them through regular conferences, a resource centre, and an oversight committee. It is these congregations that often bring to the surface the ecclesiological issues that need to be addressed in a systematic way.
186. Through the 1990s the Anglicans invested their chief ecumenical energy with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, which eventually led to an agreement of full communion, the Waterloo Declaration of 2001. Although the United Church had an observer on the preparatory committees, there was considerable resentment about this other bilateral development. Knowing that this resentment existed, and with a concern for the ecumenical shared ministries, Anglicans and the United Church re-established bilateral dialogue in 2000. This issued in the *St Brigid Report* of 2009. This report was commended for study in the

churches and the dialogue has begun a new phase, with a mandate to 'focus on an examination of the doctrinal identities of the two churches and the implications of this for the lives of the churches, including understandings of the sacraments and orders of ministry'.

**Recognition of ministries**

187. The goal is not organic union or even full communion, but an examination of the issues between the two churches. In the longer term it is hoped that there could be mutual recognition of ministries and possibly full communion.

## 4: Some precedents for the recognition of ministries within relationships of communion

### A model from the Anglican-Lutheran communion in Northern Europe

188. In 1996 the Porvoo agreement brought the four British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches (with the exception of Latvia, which has not yet signed) into a communion of churches stretching across northern Europe.<sup>62</sup> The method that Porvoo adopted built on BEM, the Anglican-Lutheran *Niagara Report*<sup>63</sup> and the Church of England document *Apostolicity and Succession*.<sup>64</sup> It operated with the distinction, employed by those documents, between the apostolicity of the whole Church and the sign of that apostolicity, the historic episcopate. The Porvoo Declaration was predicated on a mutual recognition that the historic episcopate had been preserved in all the participating churches. But there was a particular difficulty that had to be overcome before this could be affirmed by the Anglican churches.

62 See *Together in Mission and Ministry: The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe* (London: Church House Publishing, 1992).

63 *The Niagara Report: Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcopate Niagara Falls 1987* (London: Anglican Consultative Council; Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1988).

64 *Apostolicity and Succession*, House of Bishops Occasional Paper (London: Church House Publishing, 1994).

189. In the mid-sixteenth century Roman Catholic bishops continued to serve in some of the churches of the Lutheran Reformation, but in some churches no such bishops continued to serve. At Martin Luther's instigation, the episcopate of Denmark, Norway and Iceland was continued by means of consecrations at the hands of the Lutheran theologian Johannes Bugenhagen, who was a priest, not a bishop. Did this mean, the Anglicans had to ask themselves, that the visible historical continuity of those churches with the Church of the apostles, under the sign of the historic episcopate, had been irrevocably severed? The Porvoo conversations did not draw that conclusion. They recognized (a) that Bugenhagen's intention had been to consecrate bishops, not presbyters; (b) that the churches in question had maintained the episcopal succession since that time, as the continuation of those historic sees of those lands testified. The Porvoo Agreement based on these recognitions committed the signatory churches normally to involve bishops of churches in communion in the consecration of their bishops.

190. In other words, Porvoo accepted that the historic episcopate could be continued by means of a presbyteral consecration in exceptional circumstances, provided that the proper order of the Church, involving bishops who themselves had been consecrated by bishops, was resumed forthwith and that there was a manifest intention to maintain the historic ministry of the Church. However, it should be noted that, under Porvoo, interchangeability is subject to the rules that pertain at the time within the member churches, so that any Lutheran clergy who had been ordained by cathedral deans in Norway and Denmark would not be able to be

licensed to hold office within the four Anglican churches (even though such ordinations are seen within their own churches as part of the delegation of episcopal functions to presbyters in a vacancy).

191. Porvoo was specific to the circumstances of northern Europe where the ministry of bishops of the historic sees, going back to medieval times, was one factor to be considered. But the question of whether the historic episcopate could be recognized in a church where episcopacy had been perpetuated at one time by means of a presbyteral consecration may be relevant to the Episcopal-Methodist quest for full communion in America.

### Models of full communion in North America

192. The Episcopal Church has a highly impressive track record of intensive work for full communion with a range of ecumenical partner churches over many years. The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA, which at that time had bishops, though not in the historic episcopate) found their own route to full communion. In *Called to Common Mission (CCM)* the two churches built on the Interim Eucharistic Sharing agreement of 1984, which recognized each others' apostolicity in word and sacrament. On the basis of *CCM*, the two churches proclaimed full communion in 2001 and committed themselves to participating in each other's consecrations of bishops. They instituted immediate interchangeability of ordained ministers, whether ordained within the historic episcopate or not. To achieve this, TEC temporarily suspended the requirement of the historic Anglican Ordinal for episcopal ordination and the ELCA approved

a dispensation whereby Episcopal clergy wishing to serve in the ELCA need not subscribe to the Augsburg Confession (1530). One side-effect of *CCM* is that those ELCA bishops and pastors who have been ordained by bishops within the historic episcopate are in principle interchangeable with clergy of the Anglican Communion outside North America (subject to decision within each member church).

193. The *Waterloo Declaration* in Canada established full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the Anglican Church of Canada in 2001. Prior to the signing of the Declaration, the ELCIC had agreed that it considered its bishops to be ordained for life service in the gospel. According to a particular canonical interpretation peculiar to the Anglican Church of Canada, and the commitment of both churches to reciprocal participation in episcopal consecrations, it was possible for there to be immediate interchangeability of ministers, episcopal collegiality and joint working at various levels.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Called to Full Communion: A Study Resource for Lutheran-Anglican Relations*, Joint Working Group of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998.

## 5: Churches which do not have structured bilateral relationships

194. The findings from the survey (see **para 136**) show that most churches do not have structured bilateral relations with each other, especially where they are minorities in their respective countries. In some of these situations there seems to be no ecumenical engagement. In other situations, multilateral rather than bilateral relations are preferred. Due to their minority status and the challenges of materialism, consumerism, secularism, and religious extremism, these churches find that joint witness is essential in their respective contexts. For example, in Bangladesh, Singapore and Malaysia there is no bilateral dialogue. Rather there is multilateral dialogue taking place among the churches. Issues of concern for these churches are the ordained ministry, interchangeability of ministries and the episcopate. By way of follow-up these churches would like to learn more about ecumenical relations. In central and southern Europe it is reported that there are no bilateral relations and they do not engage in common activities due to the problem of language, especially in cases where one denomination is largely made up of English-speaking congregations.
195. However, language diversity and tensions between churches may be a barrier for any form of relationship in these contexts. Nevertheless, churches in this context might encourage initiatives to learn from each other, to find ways to break down language barriers, to discern and to resolve the neuralgic factors which lead to tensions within relationships theologically and pastorally.
196. We have encountered situations where multilateral dialogue is taking place at the level of Councils of Churches. Two such encounters were in South Africa and the Caribbean. In the case of the former the feeling is that Anglicans and Methodists are far more effective at the multilateral level and there are points of cooperation, for example in collaboration around theological education and ministerial formation. In the West Indies we learned there was much hope surrounding the signing of the Covenant between the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Britain. Cooperation continues at the level of the Caribbean Conference of Churches and both churches are open to further dialogue, especially seeing that all pastors are trained either at the United Theological College or Codrington College.

### Conclusion

197. The Church of South India and the Church of North India, both united churches, inspire us through what they have achieved. Each of them not only worked multilaterally, but also envisioned and made real new possibilities early in the ecumenical movement. Even their history of following distinct paths bears witness to the new and different ways that the Holy Spirit can work with hearts and minds that are willing to follow. The organic union these churches have achieved is a wonderful and powerful expression of Christian commitment to full visible unity.
198. The bilateral dialogues considered in this report seek to express full visible communion through interchangeable ministry. The challenges for establishing interchangeable ministry are somewhat different for those Methodist churches that have

the office of bishop and those that do not. We recognize the need for different approaches to the task, and we commend each bilateral dialogue for working to find a satisfactory agreement for their respective situations. We also encourage these dialogues to pay close attention to and learn from precedents in other dialogues. The achievements of other churches can not only inspire, but also provide models for what is possible.

199. Churches which have reached something of a stalemate in their conversations with each other may take heart in seeing that other churches have found ways to overcome obstacles. Breakthroughs in one dialogue may be encouragements to another. We urge these churches to take what small steps they can, trusting that God will lead them to deeper relationships.
200. For churches which have not yet begun serious ecumenical dialogue with each other, we hold up the biblical reflection at the beginning and end of this report as evidence of our mandate to seek unity for the sake of mission. The task is hard, but our Lord has not left us without tools for the labour. The Tool Kits for Anglican-Methodist Conversations (Part 3) will be helpful for beginning to respond as an obedient church in answer to Christ's prayer for our unity.

Part Three

Tool Kits for  
Anglican-Methodist Conversations



## Introduction

201. As we have worked together on AMICUM we have become aware of issues which may emerge in bilateral dialogues between Anglicans and Methodists, and in situations on the ground in local churches. These have been gathered together in a series of questions to help churches engaged in bilateral dialogues to focus on key issues. In some cases the questions asked may appear very obvious, but, from time to time, forgetting to ask the most obvious of questions can come back to haunt us at a later stage in the dialogue. Some of the material here will be equally applicable in the context of trilateral or multilateral conversations, other parts may have to be adapted.

### Tool Kit 1: Questions at the wider level

#### a. What is the end goal in view?

202. This question often proves more complex than we might think. For many years it may have been presupposed that the goal of such conversations was organic unity, in other words that the two churches involved would come together in an institutional and organizational way, as one organism. In other cases, something like the interchangeability of ministries might be in view while leaving the churches involved separate and discrete at an institutional level. The danger is that one party in the dialogue might subconsciously have one end in view, while the other may be thinking quite differently. This is particularly important in contexts where the numbers in the two churches are vastly different, and where there may be a fear of the smaller being subsumed.

#### b. Is the goal owned at local level'?

203. In many contexts, there are people who have a real heart for ecumenical conversations, and who can give a lead from the top down. The danger is that they begin to inhabit a world which is not owned by people and congregations at local level, and then discover well into a dialogue that they are answering questions which the ordinary members of their churches are not asking. A great deal of energy needs to be put into both listening to and informing people at every stage and level in language that they can understand, ensuring that relationships are being built up on the ground, and hearing and responding to any fears there may be. Theoretical ecumenism is not enough, and can lead to discouragement if a great deal of work is done, only to discover that very few actually were committed to the goal. Ecumenical relationships need to be pragmatic and practical as well as theoretical and theological.

#### c. Is the true goal missional?

204. It is always worth pushing the question, even to the point of pain, as to what unity is for. If our unity in Christ is visibly expressed 'that the world might believe', then we need to have identified the way in which unity will help us to achieve Christ's mission in our context. If the truth be told, projects of unity have sometimes led to more effective mission, and sometimes not. If they become ends in their own right, they can simply occupy time and energy, while others use the time and energy missionally. There needs to be a missional purpose in unity projects right from the beginning, so that there is a kingdom goal beyond the church. Sharing in a common mission also gives a common focus

to which people aspire, and this has the natural effect of bringing people together. Great honesty is needed in this area. Dutiful unity or unity to survive are not enough. Clarifying the nature of our common mission may be difficult but it lays a secure foundation and develops a goal outside of ourselves. If we do not have a common mission that can be identified, not just theoretically and vaguely but specifically and pragmatically in this generation, the drive towards unity is unlikely to be there and apathy can easily ensue, or, worse, the driver is likely to be pure survival rather than gospel principles.

**d. Can the churches identify particular charisms in each other which they would wish to own?**

205. This is a very important question, because, for generations, our default mechanism was to define ourselves denominationally by our differences, in a rather negative way. That which was *different* in the other denomination was precisely what we did not wish to own. Thankfully, the atmosphere is different today in many contexts, but we must be careful of contrived or less than honest expressions of what we value in the other. If a bilateral relationship is working well, the two churches concerned will, through practical experience, discussion, study and personal friendships, increasingly see that which is good in their fellow Christians from the other church. In many cases that means recognizing something of the character which has been inherited, often from the very beginning of that denomination.

206. A question which focuses this area in a positive way is 'What might we need to receive from the other in order to be more fully the church we are

called to be?' We need to be able to spell out what it is that we would wish to receive from the other partner which would be a blessing to us. We also need to see in ourselves that that which we may consider simply *normal* may at times be either quirky or a real insight which we have to offer. Equally, churches need to be careful of imposing that which they believe to be a charism on the other (sometimes less than willing) partner. Where a bilateral relationship works well, the charisms of each will be heightened rather than diminished, just as, when a marriage works well, the gifts of each are enhanced. And we will be able to name at least some of them with a sense of joy and gladness.

**e. Are both churches being treated with equal respect, or is one dominating the other?**

207. It is very important that each party in a bilateral relationship be honest with themselves, and before God, about any attitude of superiority which they may have about their church. This does not mean that each party in a bilateral relationship will not have particular things which they value, or theological insights which are central to their understanding, or even some things that prove to be non-negotiable. But there can be factors of race, wealth, size, style or culture which lead to a subconscious and unspoken sense of dominating or being dominated. These need to be handled sensitively, because someone who feels dominated may be nervous about expressing how they feel, especially what they feel is denied by the other. When that happens, deeper hurt and misunderstanding can ensue. There is nothing worse than speaking out your feelings tentatively only to discover that they are not received.

**f. Are there key areas of doctrine which have been unexplored and which may cause strain in the future by being subconscious?**

208. At certain points in conversations, doctrinal emphases which differentiate the two parties will be put on the table. Some of these may prove to be of importance, others may prove to be variants within both traditions, rather than dividing the two traditions. There may be other points in a dialogue where the two churches involved make a statement that there are no crucial doctrinal issues separating them. That can be a positive thing to do, but sometimes it may have the effect of closing close down further conversation on issues which may still appear crucial to some. The most surprising of issues can emerge as needing discussion, not least because the parties did not realize that they were still perceived differences. With Methodists and Anglicans, these can, for example, include questions of predestination and freewill, or sanctification and perfectionism, or the understanding and misunderstanding of a perceived doctrine of *baptismal regeneration*. Usually they can be worked through, but they are better placed on the table and looked at honestly. As relationships of trust build up, people are more able to be honest with one another and ask questions which they may have feared to ask at earlier stages.
209. Some conversations have had a principle that doctrinal issues should be dealt with essentially by using the stated doctrinal formulations or documents of the two denominations, to give a sense of objectivity, but this is not always possible in areas where doctrine is not so clearly formulated in print, or where emphases have developed in

particular places which may not totally be conveyed by words on paper.

**g. Have potential painful and difficult points been faced?**

210. In some cases, painful things have happened in the past in the relationships between different parts of God's Church. As in any situation like this, it will be important to build good trusting relationships before dealing with some of the more painful areas, but it is equally important not to avoid them. They may in some cases be related to perceptions of one church treating the other as not quite truly Christian, or not quite truly a church, or defining a denomination negatively, or a perception that the sacraments or ministry of a particular denomination are not seen as being as *complete* or as good as the other. There may be memories in living history of members of one denomination not being allowed to receive the sacrament in the other. The points where differences are challenging can sometimes be surprising, such as whether the wine of communion should be distributed in individual glasses or a common cup. These areas need to be treated with great sensitivity.

**h. Are different worship styles respected when coming together for services?**

211. This is an area to be given consideration. For example, some churches wear certain vesture, some do not. Some use a fixed liturgy, and some do not. Is the rule of thumb to be that the tradition of the church in which the worship takes place is to be respected, or that some compromise in-between is brought into place for joint worship? The danger, if there is no conversation about this, is that the

stronger wins, almost by default, and resentment can be built up over a period of time that the traditions of the other are being excised or not respected.

**i. How and when is each church in a bilateral relationship to be integrated into the governance and training processes of the other?**

212. It is crucial that churches in bilateral relationships have insights into the issues of the other and how they are handled, not necessarily from a position of decision-making, but from a place where they can be involved, contribute, understand, and feed back into their own constituency. This means the vital importance of being present at synods and conferences; of ordinands and others training for ministries doing so in a shared way, at least at points; of having members from equivalent committees at least present and contributing to parallel committees in the other church; and of ministers from one church intentionally meeting with ministers of the other.

**j. What is the bilateral agreement seeking to achieve with regard to interchangeability of ministries?**

213. This is undoubtedly one of the most complex issues in relationships between Methodists and Anglicans. It is complex because Methodists do not generally have any issue about receiving Anglican clergy as interchangeable, but there can be an issue in the other direction. Under this issue lie questions of threefold ministry and the historic episcopate. Which of the ministries exactly are to

be interchangeable? Is it at the level of deacons and presbyters or also episcopal ministry? Any dialogue in this context will be seeking to find a way through. However, there are also issues of discipline and authority: In a context of interchangeability who has the authority? Who appoints to a role? Can ministers of one church take on any role in the other, or only certain roles? What if there is disparity of stipends in the two churches? If ministers in one church are transferable with another in a particular context, what about ministers of churches in communion with that church?

**k. Are any potential bilateral agreements being checked for consistency against what each church is saying officially to other denominations or in other conversations?**

214. This is very important for integrity. None of our churches wants to be saying one thing to one ecumenical partner, and something different to another: that would be both dishonest and confusing. There are different ways of dealing with this question in the worldwide communions. In the Anglican Communion, for example, agreements are looked at by the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFUO), which can then point out any potential issues. In other churches this is done differently, but we need always to be aware that what we are saying in a dialogue with one partner should be open and transparent, and will be heard by others also.

**l. What is the nature of a bilateral relationship where agreement has been reached on the matters of Bible, sacraments, creeds and ministry?**

215. Is that then a relationship of full communion? Or is there more to be done? Would it in fact be possible to come to all these agreements, and yet have made very little actual difference in terms of the unity of the churches concerned? One way forward in facing these questions is to draft clear and specific agreements.

**m. At what point is the agreement to be put into words?**

216. There is no doubt that putting an agreement into words, and the signing of such an agreement, can have great power. It concretizes what is taking place. In a sense, it fixes things at a particular moment, and the moment chosen to do that is very important indeed. It will in most cases, be driven by particular factors, not least the factor of the amount of time and energy the two denominations have been able to give to dialogue, and the extent of the agreement reached. In truth, there needs to be enough reality on the ground at this point, especially in terms of good and intentional relationships between the two churches, to ensure that such an agreement is seen as practical, rather than being a fantasy wish of theologians; but any agreement will also be setting out a new normality for the future. It should become a plumb-line against which the bilateral relationship is assessed, and held accountable. So the words of any agreement, commitment or covenant need to be freely available for all to see, posted up on church

walls, printed in church publications, used in liturgies, and available on websites. Otherwise, they can become meaningless, and people will eventually ask: 'What difference has all this made?'

217. The actual words are important too, and there are many examples available, but the general shape of such agreements or covenants is:
- What we are agreed about? What do we acknowledge as true which holds us together at the present?
  - A general vision statement about what God is calling us to be.
  - Specific commitments which will move us towards that vision over the next period of time. These should as much as possible be concrete and verifiable, without being too time-limited or detailed.
218. The points above have been largely a tool kit or check-list for churches engaging in working towards a bilateral relationship between Methodists and Anglicans. It is recognized that there are many different kinds of situations where the relationship might be, for example, between a united church and Anglicans, or trilateral or multilateral. The principles can easily be adapted for these situations.
219. One of the important factors to note is that the work which goes on at national/provincial/conference/General Synod level needs also to be mirrored by an equivalent and perhaps more important intentionality at parish/congregational and diocesan/district level, where things can be made happen locally. For the sake of simplicity those two levels, present in both of our churches, are conflated here in a more local church tool kit.



## Tool Kit 2: Questions for churches at the local level

### a. How can we intentionally enable church leaders and ministers in knowing each other and working together?

220. If we are honest, it is nearly always easier to work separately, and the key starting point for the development of bilateral relationships locally, or indeed of wider local ecumenical relationships, is leaders getting to know each other personally and developing relationships of trust, fellowship and care. The people of God are not likely to engage if their leaders do not give them a lead. So those responsible for *episcopate* need to develop good relationships with one another, which are life-giving and not threatening, and then to take responsibility to ensure that the ministers under their oversight are enabled to do likewise. This can be helped by invitations to synods, diocesan or district events, clergy conferences, special services (where the presence of the other should be acknowledged and celebrated). Then, more locally, clergy need to take responsibility for building relationships (though this will often be influenced for good or bad by the personalities and even theological perspectives of the particular clergy) which will draw the two churches together relationally through their appointed leaders.

### b. How can we engage more effectively in joint projects of mission?

221. Where churches find themselves serving the same or a similar locality, whether at district/diocesan level or at congregational/parish level,

it is good to root closer unity firmly in God's mission for and to that place. Often churches will find themselves engaging in parallel responses to the same needs, whether in relation to personal evangelism, speaking into the political situation, social needs, or others. The question is, 'Can we achieve more together than alone?' We need to be honest about the answer. The ecumenical Lund principle is 'whether they [the churches] should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately'.<sup>66</sup> In some cases, two bodies working together can create a complexity of committees and an inability to make easy decisions; in other cases, with careful management, both churches can be provided with a godly focus outside of themselves that gives vision and direction, and movement can be created where there was no movement before. It can also provide opportunity for the people of two denominations to work together in achieving something for the Lord, which opens up for them new possibilities for relationship and a new understanding of what is in each other's hearts.

### c. How can we have valued and regular experience of what it is to worship together?

222. This is of vital importance and can happen in a variety of ways. It needs to happen on the level of each church experiencing the ways of worship and liturgy which are life-giving for the other. That is very important, and often the people of one denomination want to be invited simply to participate in the normal worship of the other. But

66 Nicholas Losky and others, eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, ad loc

it can go further still, where the people of both denominations realize that so many of the key aspects of worship which are life-giving for one are also life-giving for the other, and that these can be brought together coherently and creatively in a way which blesses all. Then there are also opportunities for particular aspects of worship to be shared which are peculiar to each denomination. For example, many Anglicans have been greatly blessed by the Covenant Service which they might never have had the opportunity to participate in, had it not been shared in this way. As things develop, there will be the opportunities for jointly led acts of worship, and for participation in holy communion together, with the clergy involved at a level appropriate to the particular stage of development in that place and the regulations of the particular churches. Sometimes, this joint worship can be rooted in special times such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, or key Christian feasts.

**d. How can we best avoid any misunderstandings as we worship together?**

223. We do not always realize that our own way of worship is not simply the norm. Thinking through issues before they actually happen is critically important as we seek to work together in a way which is productive and a blessing to both our churches. One of the first places where this may come to light is in relation to holy communion. One church may normally use leavened bread, the other unleavened; one may use alcoholic wine, the other non-alcoholic grape juice; one may use a common cup, the other individual glasses; one may consume all the remaining elements, the other may dispose of them in a range of ways

which may or may not be considered reverent by the other. Children may usually receive in one but not the other. And so the list continues. And just one of these things can spark off someone's sensitivities and lead to a situation of conflict where we had planned unity. The key thing, then, is for everything to be thought through well before the service concerned, including issues such as where the ministers of the visiting denomination are placed, what they wear and what role they have in the service.

**e. How can we best share stories of faith together?**

224. This is a critical point in any relationship, but may need to be handled sensitively. Sometimes, people of one of the denominations may be more experienced in giving testimony to their faith, and others can feel cowed by that; but, handled well, without cliché, and enabling people simply to speak of what they have seen and heard, can bring a new warmth and respect into relationships. This can be done in small groups, in special events or services, or even one to one in a structured way. What is so often discovered is that there is a commitment to and experience of the same Lord, and that can be a moment of revelation.

**f. Can we draw up a local agreement to work together?**

225. These may in some cases be either restricted by or enabled by the regulations of particular churches in relation to ecumenical relationships, but there are very few situations in which they are not possible. The agreement can sit under and reflect any wider agreement between the particular churches, or it may simply be a set of concrete, verifiable, time-related

goals. In some cases it may be an agreement to work together as one, where Methodists and Anglicans share as a joint congregation. That may need to include areas of governance, finance, buildings, worship, ministry provision, etc. In many situations short of a fully united congregational life, some steps towards unity are possible, and such an agreement can ensure that things are actually happening and changing at local level.

**g. Can we consider making joint appointments to children's, youth and pastoral roles?**

226. It is often at these levels, and particularly the first two, that new generation begins to see things differently. In many places, there may be a limited budget for such provision, and working together can enable new possibilities. In some places children's and youth programmes can also be shared, but it is vitally important that people in such joint roles do not find themselves torn in their loyalties. Help needs to be given with this, and it is vitally important not to be answerable to two masters.

**h. How do we provide opportunities for shared Bible study, and discussion of what is of value in each other's tradition.**

227. It is so often in the sharing of the Word of God together that we are drawn into the same vision, and into the presence of the living Word. This will, of course, at time open up the fact that there are different interpretations of the scriptures, and will allow us to share with the other our inheritance of faith as we have received it. In some cases Lent and/or Advent will present good opportunities for joint Bible study, especially where ecumenical courses are available for this purpose.



# Appendices



## Tool Kit 3: Intentional ecumenical learning – suggestions for practical implementation in theological education

228. Ecumenical learning enables people, while remaining rooted in one tradition of the church, to become open and responsive to the richness and perspectives of other churches, and thus to become more active in seeking unity, openness and collaboration between churches.<sup>67</sup> Anglican and Methodist theological institutions should be constantly aware of the pluralistic nature of our contexts in terms of religion, culture and ideologies. In such situations, the study of ecumenism provides an opportunity for theological institutions to address these issues in a meaningful way. To enhance this study process, it may be necessary to reorder the priorities in theological education in terms of policy development and implementation for curricula despite, even though this may be costly. The following are some concrete suggestions:

- i. both the dominant theological perceptions and the majority denominational traditions of a certain region should be challenged to include proper presentations, participation and even reorientation by Christian minority traditions, both from within their own context and from other contexts, in their theological curriculum and theological teaching materials (handbooks);
- a. theological education institutions of one context and denominational background should be challenged to develop long-term reciprocal partnership and exchange

programmes with theological education institutions from a different context and church background;

- b. ecumenism, intercultural theology and ecumenical missiology are necessary horizons within the classical five disciplines of theological science; they should be an integral part of both study and research in theological faculties;
- c. individualism, voluntarism and one-sided denominationalism in college life are challenged by the deliberate introduction of ecumenical elements into the regular worship life of any given college (e.g. intercessions for other churches; statements of faith from other traditions; music and hymns from global Christianity);
- d. students should be challenged to learn at least one language different from their own native language and the dominant language of their context, and to participate in a cross-denominational and cross-cultural theological education programme for a certain period, in order to be introduced to, and immersed in, the challenges and dynamics of proper intercultural communication;
- e. each theological college/faculty/university should be encouraged to commit itself to responsible participation in ecumenical stewardship of financial resources for theological education worldwide, given the grave and persistent financial inequalities for theological education; this could be achieved either by giving scholarships to a college in

<sup>67</sup> *Alive together: A Practical Guide to Ecumenical Learning* (Geneva: WCC, 1989)

another context, extending ecumenical journal subscriptions to other colleges, or providing placements for international students and lectures in one's own college;

- f. churches should be challenged to strengthen their sense of active ownership of theological institutions as a vital source for their own renewal by sending qualified pastoral scholars into theological institutions, making provisions in church budgets for appropriate financial support, creating scholarship funds particularly for Master and PhD programmes and embarking on proper regional development plans for the future of theological education.

229. The WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre highlighted the centrality of ecumenical formation for all aspects of the work of the WCC as well as for theological education in its member churches. The process of bringing to realization the specific implications of this overarching and manifold task has only just begun.

## Appendix I

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## Appendix 2

### List of abbreviations

ACC	Anglican Consultative Council
AMICUM	Anglican-Methodist International Commission on Unity in Mission
ARCIC	Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission
BEM	Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry



*Members of AMICUM in St Augustine's Church, Langa, South Africa*

JIC	Joint Implementation Commission
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
SAC	Sharing in the Apostolic Communion
WCC	World Council of Churches
WMC	World Methodist Council

## Appendix 3

### Membership of AMICUM

#### Anglicans

The Rt Revd Harold Miller (2009–2013) Co-Chair  
 The Rt Revd Franklin C. Brookhart (2009–2010)  
 The Revd Garth Minott (2011–2013)  
 The Rt Revd Dr Surya Prakash (2009–2013)  
 The Revd Canon Professor Paul Avis (2009–2013)  
 The Very Revd Flavio Irala (2010)  
 The Revd Canon Lulama Mtanjiswa Ntshingwa  
 (2009–2012)

#### Methodists

The Revd Professor Robert Gribben (2009–2013)  
 Co-Chair  
 Dr Elizabeth Amoah (2009–2013)  
 Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt (2009–2012)  
 The Revd Gareth Powell (2009–2013)  
 The Revd Dr Wong Tik Wah (2010–2013)  
 Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader (2010)  
 The Revd Professor Sarah Lancaster (2011–2013)

#### Lutheran Observer

The Rt Revd Walter Jagucki, Bishop of the  
 Lutheran Church in Great Britain (2009–2013)

#### Co-Secretaries

##### Anglican

The Revd Canon Gregory Cameron (2009)  
 The Revd Canon Dr Alyson Barnett-Cowan  
 (2010–2013)

##### Methodist

The Rev Dr George Freeman (2009)  
 Bishop Heinrich Bolleter (2010)  
 The Revd Gareth Powell (acting 2011–2013)

##### Consultants

The Rev Dr W Douglas Mills (2009)  
 The Rev Peter Sulston (2009)  
 The Revd Dr David Chapman (2010)

##### Administrative support

The Revd Terrie Robinson (2009)  
 Neil Vigers (2010–2013)

## Appendix 4

### Meetings of AMICUM

2009 Mexico City, Mexico

2010 Ammerdown, Somerset, England

2011 Cape Town, South Africa

2012 Baltimore, Maryland, USA

2013 Ocho Rios, Jamaica

## Appendix 5

### Photo credits

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| Wesley Methodist Church,   | Kuala Lumpur   |
| The Lambeth Conference; Lovely Lane Chapel; Mt Pisgah CME Zion; Waitangi Treaty House; members of AMICUM | The Anglican Consultative Council  |
| Consecration of The Rev Peter Murray, by William Newell  |  |

