

Communion in Ministry and Mission

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Communion in Ministry and Mission

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Introduction

The first task given to the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith & Order (IASCUFO) is to promote the deepening of communion between the Churches of the Anglican Communion, and between those Churches and the other Churches and traditions of the Christian *oikumene*.

The fruits of IASCUFO's work are reflected in its studies and reports, which can be found on the Anglican Communion website and in the published reports of the Anglican Consultative Council of 2012 and 2016. The major studies are also published in a series of Unity, Faith & Order Papers.

The first Unity, Faith & Order Paper, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, was prepared for the Anglican Consultative Council meeting (ACC-15) in 2012. It introduces the purpose, development, and theology of the four Instruments of Communion, in order that Anglicans and others may come to a fresh understanding of how they serve our common life, and how they deepen our communion with the Triune God and with one another for mission and service in the world.

Communion in Ministry and Communion is the second paper in the Unity, Faith & Order collection. It contains the three IASCUFO texts which the 2016 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council at Lusaka, Zambia, commended to the Churches of the Anglican Communion.

The three texts in this volume now deal with a variety of questions of communion in ministry and mission that complement and develop themes in *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*. The first text, *Receiving One Another's Ordained Ministries*, spells out why reconciling episcopal ministries is vital for the Anglican Communion in its ecumenical relations. It outlines how Anglicans can move from recognising the ministries of other churches to receiving them in new relationships of (full) communion.¹

The second text, *Instruments of Communion: Gifts, Signs and Stewardship*, follows directly from *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*. It reflects on the particular ministries exercised by all who participate in the four Instruments that serve the Anglican Communion: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting. Too often, these are treated as abstract ecclesiological concepts. Here they are treated as comprised of persons, real people whose gifts and ministries merit care and stewardship.²

The third text, *A Mission-Shaped Communion*, was first presented to IASCUFO by one of its members, Professor Paul Avis, and was revised and adopted by the Commission. It is a theological reflection on the relationship between the biblical concepts of ‘mission’ and ‘communion’. IASCUFO brings missiological and ecclesiological priorities together in a fresh way, and shows how vital both are to the unity of the Anglican Communion today, and indeed, to the unity and mission of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.³

The three texts in *Communion in Ministry and Communion* are commended to the provinces of the Anglican Communion, and in particular to those engaged in work for the unity of the Church, to those who exercise leadership in the Anglican Communion, with particular attention to those who serve as Instruments of Communion; and to those who support and uphold them.

Notes

¹ Resolution 16.19: Receiving One Another's Ordained Ministry

The Anglican Consultative Council

1. receives IASCUFO's report, *Receiving One Another's Ordained Ministry*, as a resource to assist member Churches of the Anglican Communion in recognizing and receiving ordained ministry in their relationships with ecumenical partners; and
2. commends it for study and action in the provinces of the Anglican Communion as they seek to order their ecumenical relationships.

² Resolution 16.20: A Mission-Shaped Communion

The Anglican Consultative Council

1. receives IASCUFO's report, *A Mission-Shaped Communion*, as a resource to help the member churches of the Anglican Communion to appreciate deeply the gift and responsibility of the communion we share; and
2. commends the report to the provinces of the Anglican Communion, and all the Instruments of Communion.

³ Resolution 16.21: Instruments of Communion: Gifts, Signs, and Stewardship

The Anglican Consultative Council

1. receives IASCUFO's report, Instruments of Communion: Gifts, Signs, and Stewardship, as a way to assist the provinces of the Anglican Communion in recognizing and receiving the four Instruments of Communion as gifts; and
2. commends the report to all those who exercise leadership within the Anglican Communion with particular attention to the Instruments of Communion.



Receiving One Another's
Ordained Ministries



Receiving One Another's Ordained Ministries

Introduction

1. Called to make visible the unity of Christ's Church, the Churches of the Anglican Communion continue to grow into joyfully demanding relationships with our various ecumenical partners. Experiences of dialogue and praying together have greatly enriched our sense of who we are as Anglicans. In matters of mission, liturgy, theology, spirituality, ethics (and much more besides) the horizon of our Churches has been widened by graced encounters with our Christian sisters and brothers.
2. Anglicans recognise the extent of our participation in a shared life with Christians in other ecclesial traditions, using the biblical language of fellowship or communion (Greek *koinonia*). The rich theological language of communion underscores how this relationship is understood as a gift of the Triune God. We can neither establish communion with one another, nor break it, but simply recognise and receive it.
3. The communion in which we participate has different degrees. While relationships between Churches may be, for example, of *full* or of *impaired* communion, we recognise such communion as a divine gift at the heart of both our intra-Anglican and ecumenical

relationships. As these relationships grow stronger, Anglicans inevitably face the question as to whether the degree of communion we share with our ecumenical partners has sufficient theological strength and depth to be articulated as a common calling to fuller communion with the traditions concerned. More specifically, is the communion that we share at a sufficient degree or stage that we might receive one another's ordained ministries?

Anglican Ecclesiology in Context

4. The answer that Anglicans give to this kind of question – and the way in which we respond to the situation out of which it emerges – is rooted in how we understand what it means to be a Church. Ecclesiology is the branch of theology that looks both to Christian tradition and to experience to set out the shape of the Christian Church. Anglicans have been shaped by centuries of ecclesiological debate, conflict and reflection, and this has shaped our common life. We bring this Anglican tradition of understanding the Church with us as we enter into dialogue with an ecumenical partner. In the past, and as a result of dialogue and prayer, we have found it necessary to review how we express our self-understandings as Anglican Churches. Undoubtedly, since our tradition is a living reality, we will continue to face the task of reinterpreting ourselves afresh. Contexts change, and so do the ways in which tradition interacts with experience.

5. Many of our dialogues have resulted in new and flourishing relationships between formerly estranged Christian traditions. How do we speak about this relationship, while honouring the integrity of the partners in dialogue and their respective ecclesiologies? In ecumenical theology, these kinds of questions are posed using the language of *recognition*. To what extent do Anglicans *recognise* other Churches as Churches? And what are the consequences of recognition for the life of the Church? Can partners in dialogue move into a relationship of *communion* or *full communion*? If they can, what is the place of *mutual recognition* of the authenticity of ordained ministries, on the one hand, and of *reconciliation* or *interchangeability* of ministries, on the other?

Ecclesiology: Anglican and Ecumenical

6. It is important to acknowledge that, in the past, the terms 'communion' and 'full communion' have been used in a variety of ways by Anglicans. Great care needs to be taken with the language of communion, as imprecision here is deeply unhelpful to the developing and flourishing of our ecumenical relationships.

7. Historically, Anglican ecclesiology has said that interchangeability of ministries requires reconciliation of episcopal ministries. Taking this step is possible only with partner Churches which are already ordered in the historic episcopate, or which take steps to

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receive the sign of the historic episcopate. Interchangeability of presbyters/priests can come about only when there is also interchangeability of episcopal ministers.

8. When Churches are not yet in a position to achieve interchangeability of episcopal ministries, there are still possibilities for shared ministry within specific ecumenical arrangements. These are described below. These possibilities enable Churches to express their growth in the relationship of communion, and can provide a useful step towards full reconciliation in the increasingly shared lives of the Churches concerned.
9. Anglicans in various parts of the world have taken steps to achieve full interchangeability of ministers and ministries with different ecumenical partners. In some cases these have led to full, visible (or organic) unity, expressed through unity of structures. Such full visible (or organic) unity always remains the aim, particularly in Churches that bear witness, in the same territory, to the transformative love of Christ.
10. Since its endorsement by the Lambeth Conference of 1888, the Lambeth Quadrilateral, with its four articles, has formed the foundation for relationships between Anglican and other Churches.

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- a. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- b. The Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- c. The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
- d. The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.¹

ii. At the 1920 Lambeth Conference the bishops' *Appeal to All Christian People* reiterated the fourth article of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, in a slightly different form. They affirmed that 'the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the wholehearted acceptance of ... 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'. They identified 'the episcopate' as 'the one means of providing such a ministry'.² This principle continues to underlie Anglican discussions of the interchangeability of ministry.

12. Because Anglican teaching sees the authority of the priest/presbyter as rooted in that of the ordaining bishop/episcopal minister, interchangeability of presbyteral ministers is not possible without an agreement on the interchangeability of episcopal ministers. This should include explicit commitment to the ordination/consecration of future episcopal ministers within the historic episcopate. It should also include explicit recognition that, though they may retire or otherwise no longer hold a position of oversight, they remain episcopal ministers. Similarly, there should be clear agreement that future presbyteral ordinations will be conducted only by episcopal ministers. Therefore mutual interchangeability of both ministries and ministers is possible for Anglicans with another Church only if that other Church has, or is taking steps to receive, the sign of the historic episcopate. Anglicanism's historical commitment to the connection between the unity of the Church and the historic episcopate finds an echo in wider ecumenical reflection on unity, faith and order.

13. For example: the *Porvoo Common Statement* (1996) achieved interchangeability of ministry between British and Irish Anglicans and most of the Scandinavian, Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches. It observes (§51): ‘The use of the sign of the historic episcopal succession does not by itself guarantee the fidelity of a church to every aspect of the apostolic faith, life and mission. ... Nonetheless, the retention of the sign remains a permanent challenge to fidelity and to unity, a summons to witness to, and a commission to realise more fully, the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles.’³

14. Through *Called to Common Mission* (2001), The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America committed themselves ‘to share an episcopal succession that is both evangelical and historic’ (§12).⁴ In the *Waterloo Declaration* (2001), the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada confirmed (§B.3): ‘we affirm each other’s expression of episcopal ministry as a sign of continuity and unity in apostolic faith’.⁵ The *Waterloo Declaration* also explicitly stated the principle that the giving of this office is permanent: ‘the bishops of both churches are ordained for life service of the Gospel in the pastoral ministry of the historic episcopate, although tenure in office may be terminated by retirement, resignation or conclusion of term, subject to the constitutional provisions of the respective churches’ (§B.3). Through the Bill to provide for interchangeability

of ministry between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland (2014), the Church of Ireland recognised the Methodist President as an Episcopal Minister exercising personal episcopate with an office and function consonant to that of a bishop in the Church of Ireland. It required two Church of Ireland bishops to participate ‘in all future Installations and Consecrations of the President’ and welcomed Presidents to participate in the consecration of Church of Ireland bishops (§2).⁶

15. It is important to bear in mind that, historically, the Anglican emphasis on the historic episcopate as the foundation for the reconciliation of ministries does not deny the spiritual reality of the ministries of churches which do not currently stand within the historic succession. As the 1920 *Appeal* emphasised: ‘It is not that we call in question for a moment the spiritual reality of the ministries of those Communion which do not possess the episcopate. On the contrary we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace.’ Despite the divisions and conflicts that have blighted the mission of Christ’s Church, the blessings and spiritual gifts offered by these ministries have been gratefully acknowledged by Anglicans many times.

16. Anglican recognition of the spiritual reality of these ministries, although it may (and often does) entail pulpit exchange and mutual

Eucharistic hospitality, does not imply the possibility of interchangeability of ministries. This is possible, as noted above, only in the context of a relationship that has achieved the reconciliation of ministries, which for Anglicans necessarily includes reconciliation of episcopal ministries. The question of the interchangeability of deacons can, however, be deferred for future work or, where there are differing understandings of diaconal ministry, be explicitly excluded.

17. Anglicans generally understand (full) communion as a relationship between two distinct Churches or Communions, in which each maintains its own autonomy while recognising the catholicity and apostolicity of the other. They believe the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith, which makes it possible for communicant members of each Church to receive Holy Communion, and for ordained ministers to officiate sacramentally in either Church. Full communion brings about transferability of members; mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries; and participation in each other's ordinations and installations of clergy, including bishops. It should also involve the establishment of structures for consultation to express, strengthen and enable common life, witness, and service, to the glory of God and the salvation of the world.⁷ As noted earlier, in areas where Churches minister within the same territory, full visible (or organic) unity should be explicitly named as the aim of their developing relationship.

18. Anglicans recognise that some of our non-episcopal ecumenical partners believe that mutual recognition of Churches as communities of the faithful in which the Gospel is truly preached and the sacraments rightly administered (Augsburg Confession, §7; cf. 39 Articles, Art. 19) is enough to bring about full communion and interchangeability of ministries. However, Anglicans maintain that a further stage of *reconciliation* of Churches and ministries is a prerequisite for interchangeability of ministries. It is, therefore, important to note that Anglicans see a distinction between *mutual recognition* and *reconciliation*.

19. This distinction is expressed in the *Reuilly Common Statement* (1999), §27, summarised in *Growth in Communion* (2002), §72: ‘The Reuilly agreement brings the churches to a stage along the way to full visible unity. It is described as “mutual recognition” which for Lutheran and Reformed Churches “entails full communion, which includes full interchangeability of ministries”. Anglicans see this stage as a recognition or acknowledgement which leads to a further stage as “the reconciliation of churches and ministries”.’⁸

20. The *Niagara Report* (1987), §§112–116, set out practical steps by which Anglicans and Lutherans can realise a relationship of (full) communion. These are also summarised in *Growth in Communion*, §6:

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Step 1: Regional or national churches recognise each other as sharing the same faith and hence as being a 'true Church of the Gospel'.

Step 2: Create provisional structures to express the degree of unity so far achieved and promote further growth. Examples of how to further growth include among other things: Eucharistic sharing, regular meetings of church leaders, invitation to speak at each other's synods, creating common agencies, joint theological education and mission programmes, limited interchange of ministers, and the twinning of congregations.

Step 3: The exploration of changing particular practices with respect to episcopate and the full recognition of ministries.

Step 4: Public declaration and celebration of full communion, after which 'joint consecration and installation of bishops and ordinations of new ministers should be possible'.

21. It is worth noting that these steps apply to Anglican relationships with other churches as well. Step 4 completes Step 3; at this point interchangeability of ministries becomes possible. Appendix 1 provides some helpful examples of agreements through which full communion and interchangeability of ministries and ministers have been achieved. However, Churches may not yet be at a point where they can take this step with integrity. In this case, it may be useful to note that Step 2, above, explicitly refers to the 'limited interchange of ministers'. There are a number of possibilities for interchange of ministries. This can help the Churches involved respond with a greater common flexibility to their pastoral and missional needs, but these stop short of full interchangeability. These usually provide for interchange within a specific named context. For instance, in many Anglican provinces, Local Ecumenical Projects or Partnerships or Shared Ecumenical Ministries allow ministers from different Churches to minister together to a congregation or congregations made of people drawn from those Churches.

22. For example, in England, Covenanted Partnerships in Extended Areas make it possible for Anglicans and Methodists to share ministry within the whole area and to develop a joint strategy for mission and the deployment of ministry. In Southern Africa, Covenanted Relationships between Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists have recognised that 'the ordained ministers of word and sacrament in the member churches

of the CUC [Church Unity Commission] have been called and ordained by God in Christ through his church and exercise a sacramental, preaching, teaching and pastoral ministry in the church of God and not simply in the particular church to which they belong'. This has made it possible for 'ordained ministers, *while remaining ministers of their own churches*, to exercise such ministry' in the other churches.⁹ Where Churches are not yet able to achieve full interchangeability of ministries through interchangeability of episcopal ministers, but intend to work towards this aim, then such Covenanted Partnerships may offer a useful intermediate step. More information about these schemes is in Appendix 2 below, and *The Vision Before Us*, the Kyoto Report of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (2009), considers these questions in further detail in the section 'Holy Order in Ecumenical Dialogues' (pp. 106–131).¹⁰

Conclusion

23. Learning to *recognise and receive one another in communion* is an aspect of our shared discipleship that demands time and effort on the part of our Churches. In many Churches of the Anglican Communion, the result of growing together has brought enormous joy and increased the desire to give visible expression to the gift of communion in which we participate. The way in which Anglicans have shaped ecumenical engagement draws on prayerful and critical

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reflection on both our complex theological tradition and the contexts in which our Churches are called to mission and unity. We have, as a result, built up a certain expertise and wisdom in dealing with the concrete issue of how ecumenical issues relating to ordained ministry may be addressed both fruitfully and with integrity. We now offer the fruit of this work to the Churches of the Communion, as we join our prayer to the Lord's that we might all be one, so that the world might believe.

Appendix 1

Examples of recent agreements of (full) communion which include full interchangeability of ministries include:

Between Anglicans and Lutherans:

- The *Porvoo Common Statement* between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and Lutheran Churches of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden, the Latvian Church Abroad, and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (1996);
- *Called to Common Mission* between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (2001);
- The *Waterloo Agreement* between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (2001).

Between Anglicans and Methodists:

- The Covenant between the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland (2002),¹¹ which led to the Church of Ireland Bill to provide for interchangeability of ministry between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland (2014).

Appendix 2

Examples of ecumenical covenanting relationships which enable ministers of another church to exercise their ministry in an Anglican congregation/context:

- Information on Local Ecumenical Partnerships (at parish level) can be found, for instance, here (Church of England): www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/resources/leps/single-congregation-leps.aspx.
- Information about the Covenanted Partnerships in Extended Areas with the between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain can be found here: www.churchofengland.org/media/1323520/g-4%20covenant%20partnerships%20in%20extended%20areas%202011.pdf.

Appendix 3

IASCUF0 draws attention to the fact that Principle 94 in *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion* is both ambiguous and misleading with regard to interchangeability of ministries.

Principle 94 reads:

1. Ecclesial communion between two or more churches exists when a relationship is established in which each church believes the other to hold the essentials of the Christian faith and recognises the apostolicity of the other.
2. Full communion involves the recognition of unity in faith, sacramental sharing, the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries, and the reciprocal enjoyment of shared spiritual, pastoral, liturgical and collegial resources.
3. Inter-communion is an ecclesial relationship in which at least one but not all of the elements of full communion is present.

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4. Churches in communion become inter-dependent but remain autonomous.
5. The relationship of communion does not require the acceptance of all theological opinion, sacramental devotion or liturgical practice characteristic of another church.

As discussed above, while recognition of unity in faith, sacramental sharing, and shared spiritual, pastoral, liturgical and collegial resources may represent steps on the way to full communion – and thus stages of inter-communion – the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries can come about only in the context of a relationship of full communion and implies such a relationship. Consequently, Principle 94.3 does not apply to all the aspects listed in Principle 94.2 – specifically, mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries is not one step on the way to full communion.

We note also that the language of inter-communion is no longer current in ecumenical theology.

Notes

¹The Lambeth Quadrilateral, Resolution 11 of the 1888 Lambeth Conference, can be found here: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1888/1888-11.cfm. It was reaffirmed at the 1998 Lambeth Conference (Resolution IV.2: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-4-2.cfm). The affirmation that Anglicans ‘have inherited and hold firmly to the pattern of the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, which guarantees our historical continuity and unites us with the many churches who hold to this order’ also emerged from the 2008 Lambeth Conference (§G.102: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/2008).

²The *Appeal to All Christian People*, Resolution 9 of the 1920 Lambeth Conference, can be found here: www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-9.cfm.

³The *Porvoo Common Statement* can be found here: www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102178/porvoo_common_statement.pdf

⁴ *Called to Common Mission* can be found here: www.episcopalchurch.org/page/agreement-full-communion-called-common-mission.

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⁵The *Waterloo Declaration* can be found here: www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102184/waterloo_declaration.pdf.

⁶The Bill can be found here: <http://ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Synod/2014/Bills/Bill1.pdf>.

⁷ See, for instance, the Commitments in the *Waterloo Declaration* between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (§D), not only to mutual Eucharistic hospitality and interchangeability of ministries, including mutual participation in episcopal ordinations, but also to regular consultation and collaboration, joint meetings of national, regional and local decision-making bodies, and shared mission.

⁸ *Growth in Communion*, the report of the Anglican–Lutheran International Working Group (2002), can be found here: www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102187/growthincommunion.pdf. The *Reilly Common Statement* is available in *Called to Witness and Service: The Reilly Common Statement with Essays on Church, Eucharist and Ministry* (London, 1999). The *Reilly Common Statement* (not including the preliminary theological statement from which this comment is drawn) can be found in English and French here: www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/europe/reilly-declaration.aspx.

INSTRUMENTS OF COMMUNION: GIFTS, SIGNS AND STEWARDSHIP

⁹ See: www.thefreelibrary.com/Church+Unity+Commission+%28CUC%29.+%28Southern+Africa%29.-a092136481.

¹⁰ *The Vision Before Us* can be found here:
www.anglicancommunion.org/media/107101/the_vision_before_us.pdf.

¹¹ The *Covenant* can be found here: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/47>.



Instruments of Communion: Gifts, Signs and Stewardship



Instruments of Communion: Gifts, Signs and Stewardship

1. This paper builds upon *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*,¹ a document on the four Instruments of Communion presented by IASCUFO to ACC-15 in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2013. The focus of this new paper is a positive approach to the Instruments as gifts for deepening the life of the Anglican Communion; and as signs of God's grace for the building up the fellowship of Anglican Churches as part of the world-wide body of Christ. The Instruments of Communion are made up of people with their gifts, graces and frailties, and so require the care and attention of trusted servants who act as stewards of the Instruments of Communion. This aspect is developed in the last section of this paper.

2. The Instruments of Communion are designed to facilitate communication, conversation and consensus building among the fellowship of Anglican Churches. In short, the Instruments provide ways by which the Anglican Communion seeks the wisdom of the Spirit of God for a deeper communion and faithful witness to Christ in the world. This suggests that the Instruments may be more appropriately considered as gifts for deepening communion. It also points to the fact that the deepening of communion is connected to a vital mission in the world.

3. The Instruments are not states of affairs, static entities. Rather – because the people of God, in different and complementary ways, constitute the Instruments – they belong to the rich communicative networks of Anglican life in the world. Their function and impact will inevitably become the focal point for change, controversy and new possibilities. This is all part of a dynamic catholicity. It does not diminish their gift-like character but simply witnesses to the way in which true gifts actually work in the world.

4. Concerns have often been expressed that the language of ‘instruments’ ignores the human and relational dimensions of the Instruments of Communion. Instrumental language can make it difficult to understand the Instruments as gifts for deepening communion. The Instruments operate best when they are integrated organically into the life of the Church. When the Instruments are treated as external objects they lose their human aspect and are prone to misuse and misunderstanding. Hence it is vital to remember that the Instruments of Communion are living gifts, and that they can undergo development in response to new situations. Such gifts require responsible stewardship.

5. The gift-like character of the Instruments of Communion can be enhanced by the consistent use of the language of ‘communion’ rather than ‘unity’. Interestingly, ‘unity’ was the original term in relation to the Instruments and was only later replaced by the term

‘communion’. ‘Communion’ is a broader and richer term theologically than ‘unity’. ‘Unity’ has unfortunately been too easily associated with structural and legal aspects of the Church. Such things are important but they are not the only or the most significant aspects of union with God and each other. The language of ‘communion’ offers a needed relational balance to the language of ‘instruments’. The recovery of communion terminology is of a piece with the recovery of the role of human agency and theological focus on God that actually underlies the purpose of the Instruments of Communion. Language may not solve the problems but it has a part to play in changing expectations and attitudes.

6. The real challenge is to recover the priority of a gift-centred approach to the Instruments of Communion. The Instruments always remain vulnerable to distortion and misuse. For example, the objectification of instruments leaves them vulnerable for sectional interests to prosecute their own ideas of communion, its repair or its progress. It also promotes false expectations of what is possible. A gift-centred approach to the structures of our polity is more resistant to them being dragooned into impossible problem-solving tasks. A gift-centred approach belongs to an environment that fosters consensus building, good-quality communication and responsible and accountable engagement. The Anglican Communion of Churches is called to bear witness through common practice to the incarnate Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit.

A gift-centred approach will encourage a re-conceiving of the Instruments as places of wisdom for the Anglican fellowship of Churches, for the strengthening of the witness to Christ in the world. The Instruments have to be reassessed, reshaped and reinvigorated against the horizon of the Churches' mission.

7. It is easily forgotten that the Instruments are inter-related. By treating each Instrument separately, or by failing to recognise their interconnectedness, we lose sight of our own essential connectedness and accountability to each other, and of the value of the Instruments to deepen Anglican life. For example, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lambeth Conference have a natural reciprocity, as do the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council. Closer intentional cooperation between these different Instruments nurtures an Anglican ethos which is organic, conversational and conciliar. Tensions between these different bodies is natural and to be expected, and so not a reason for jettisoning, diminishing or exalting any of them. That would not be the way of communion in the Instruments.

8. The Instruments are God's gift for deepening Anglican communion and strengthening Anglican mission. As gifts, the Instruments have a sacramental character. It is in and through such relational church structures that the people of God may hear the voice of the Living God and discern signs of God's work in the world. Indeed the language of sign might be the best way to understand the Instruments. As the Church is a sign of the coming kingdom,² so too the Instruments of Communion can be understood as ecclesial signs enabling the Church to be a sign of God's grace and goodness. This sign-like character of the Instruments orientates them towards the future and draws attention to their contingent and provisional nature. As a consequence they are signs that require the care and attention of trusted servants who act as stewards of communion.

9. This raises an important question: what responsibility do human agents have for the Instruments of Communion? If the Instruments are received as gifts and signs of communion, then clearly they have to be treated with respect and care. In this context those responsible for the exercise of the gifts do so as stewards and servants of the Instruments. When this is undertaken well the Church's witness to the Gospel of God in the world is enriched. In this sense stewardship is a broad-ranging vocation set against the horizon of the mission of God in the world.

10. The concept of stewardship has been important when considering human responsibility for creation. The early chapters of the book of Genesis point to creation as the gift of a good and caring God. The God of this remarkable and interdependent creation has the character of the benevolent care and kindly oversight of the ancient tradition of the shepherd King. Human beings, as created in the image of God, are given responsibility to care for the earth and its creatures. As such, the vocation of human beings is to follow the pattern of the care and delight in creation of the God whose image they bear. The human vocation as a steward of the garden of creation is a delegated responsibility from a good and kind God. Stewardship is an activity and calling that requires a close, respectful and responsible relationship with the earth and all living things.

11. This background of the stewardship of creation may be helpful when we deploy the idea of stewardship in relation to the Church. This involves a move from stewardship of creation to stewardship of the new creation: the Body of Christ. Christ is Head of the Body and bestows gifts on the people of the Church in order that through the Church the many riches of the wisdom of God might be shown to the world (Eph 3.10). Disciples of Christ, and in particular those called to care and exercise oversight of the Body of Christ, are called to tend the garden of the new creation, the

household (*oikos*) of the Lord. And they are called to undertake this vocation after the manner of Christ in humble obedience to the Gospel. In this vein the Apostle Paul refers to himself and his fellow apostolic leaders as ‘servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries’ (1 Cor 4.1). The new household is the fellowship in the Spirit, the communion of the faithful in Christ. This household is the result of the revealing of God’s mysteries, that is, ‘the secret knowledge of God’s purposes, disclosed in the Gospel’.³ Stewards have responsibility for the good ordering and common good of the household of faith. As in the first creation, so in the new creation, stewardship is a delegated and representative responsibility. Moreover it is a delegation of trust (1 Cor 4.2). And this vocation mirrors the original creation, that is, it requires a stewardship of the communion of the faithful after the pattern of Christ the Good Shepherd (Jn 10). Stewards of the mysteries of God, as is abundantly clear from Paul’s many letters, exercise their calling on many fronts as ambassadors of Christ, pastoral carers of the churches, and teachers of the spiritual truths of the Gospel.

12. This move from stewardship of creation to stewardship of communion may be a helpful framework in which to reconsider the purpose of the Instruments of Communion. The Instruments are intended to strengthen and enhance the Anglican Communion. But to fulfil this the Instruments require the exercise of good

stewardship. This provides a rich theological and missional horizon for the Instruments of Communion. It also draws attention to the great responsibility entrusted to the servants of God for the good functioning of the Instruments and the moral claim upon those called to fulfil this ministry of stewardship in the life of the Anglican Communion. The exercise of stewardship is undertaken by frail human beings, called to repentance and prayerfulness, and subject to wilful blindness of many kinds especially when it comes to the exercise of power and authority. The servants and stewards of the Instruments of Communion are called to exercise this particular vocation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit together with openness to correction and challenge.

13. Consideration of personal agency and responsibility for the good operation of the Instruments highlights the importance of careful appointment and on-going education of all those called to high office in the Church of God. It also calls attention to the need for robust synodical processes for the appointment of bishops, and of members of the ACC. Issues to do with personal character and ecclesial intelligence (including appreciation of the nature of the Anglican Communion as part of the body of Christ), capacity to listen, spiritual and theological wisdom, and communicative capabilities, to name but a few, are critical aspects of leadership. And these factors are especially important in appointments to

leadership to balance the emphasis on management, political and partisan interests that infect the Churches and mimic their host cultures across the globe. Such considerations go to the heart of the capacity of the Instruments of Communion to function in the life of the Anglican fellowship of Churches as genuine gifts, signs and witnesses to the coming kingdom of God.

Notes

¹ Available at www.anglicancommunion.org/media/209979/Towards-a-Symphony-of-Instruments-Web-Version.pdf

² The Church as sign of the kingdom is developed in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Faith and Order Paper No. 214, Geneva: WCC, 2013), §§25–27.

³ See C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle of the Corinthians* (2nd edition, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), p. 100.

A Mission-Shaped Communion



A Mission-Shaped Communion

1. As Anglican disciples of Jesus Christ today we follow him and share in his God-given purpose. As we will see, Jesus of Nazareth had a twofold purpose: to *unite his disciples into one body and to send them out to make more disciples*. The whole New Testament shows that the Church is charged with the same two imperatives. To explore this twofold purpose for the Church, we will use the terms *communion* and *mission*. In making this contribution, we are seeking to fulfil our mandate as a Commission of ‘deepening the communion between the Churches of the Anglican Communion’,¹ so that we may become more and more, as Pope Francis has put it, ‘a community of missionary disciples’.²

2. ‘Communion’ and ‘mission’ are significant New Testament ideas that sum up the meaning of the Church and point to what we, as Christ’s Anglican disciples today, are here for on this earth. ‘Communion’ and ‘mission’ are awesome words to a Christian. They carry an aura of mystery and point to hidden depths within the Church of Christ. The Church, as a communion, reveals Christ to the world in three key ways: proclaiming the gospel, celebrating the sacraments, and manifesting God’s love in pastoral care and loving service. These three ways – gospel, sacraments and service – are how the saving presence of Christ is manifested in the world and comprise the mission to which the Church is

called. But mission and communion are not always held together and seen as inseparable.

3. 'Communion' speaks of an intimate relationship of mutual indwelling – the indwelling of the baptised believer in God the Holy Trinity and the union or fellowship of Christians with each other in God. 'Communion' points to the community of life with God and with one another in the Church. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked, what is the meaning of our life with God if it is not at the same time a life lived with others? And what is the meaning of our fellowship with others if it is not grounded in our common life in God?³ In St John's Gospel 15.1–17 the extended image of the vine and the branches suggests that, by being joined to the true vine, the branches are inseparably connected to each other, and that is why Christ's command 'Love one another as I have loved you' immediately follows.

4. In this passage from the Fourth Gospel, Jesus embraces his disciples as his 'friends': those who are not only loved, but respond with willing obedience based on intimate understanding and so love him and each other in return. Like Abraham, Moses and David in the Old Testament, they are 'friends of God' into whom holy Wisdom has entered (Wis 7.27). Can they be friends of Christ and of God while being distant or alienated from each other?

5. The word ‘communion’ resonates immediately with the sacrament of ‘Holy Communion’, the Eucharist, which is the moment at which, Sunday by Sunday and day by day (if we are so blessed), we come closest to the Lord and are strengthened in our unity with him. The link between ecclesial communion and Holy Communion suggests that all relationships of communion between Christians and between churches should be seen as holy, set apart for God in the context of worship, and therefore to be treated with reverence and sensitivity; it should not be easily denied to one another, or wilfully severed except in extreme circumstances. The reality of community, both with God and with one another, through Jesus Christ, is at the heart of the gospel.

6. The key New Testament Greek word *koinonia* refers to sharing together in a valued reality that is greater than ourselves. *Koinonia* is translated in English Bibles as ‘communion’, ‘fellowship’ or ‘sharing’ (Acts 2.42; 1 Cor 1.9; 10.16; 2 Cor 13.13; Phil 1.5; 1 Jn 1.3). There is no significant difference in the meaning of the two English words ‘fellowship’ and ‘communion’, though ‘communion’ has more mystical overtones and ‘fellowship’ is used in secular as well as in religious contexts. The Collect for All Saints’ Day in the Book of Common Prayer (1662) uses ‘communion’ and ‘fellowship’ synonymously (‘O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son ...’), as does the

hymn that is sung particularly on that day, 'For all the saints, who from their labours rest', as it speaks of the unity of Christians in Christ: 'O blest communion, fellowship divine!' It is a communion with God the Holy Trinity and with one another in the body of Christ and the two dimensions are inextricable.

7. The word 'mission', on the other hand, points to God's just and loving purpose for the world and for all God's children – a purpose to draw all humankind into communion with God the Holy Trinity. By the same token, it points also and necessarily to the human instruments – lay people and clergy – whom God chooses to carry out that purpose. At first glance 'communion' and 'mission' may seem to refer to the inward and outward dimensions of the Church's life – communion being something that the Church enjoys within itself and mission being its outreach to those beyond – as though these were two separate, discrete activities. There is some element of truth in such an apportionment, but a hard and fast division into inward and outward aspects would be simplistic and unhelpful.

8. The living communion that constitutes the Church of Christ is not a closed communion, turned in on itself, but an open, receptive and hospitable communion, turned towards the world. The borders of the Church are not hard-drawn and impervious, but are intentionally porous to enable them to welcome all who are

called by God to progress through the journey of Christian initiation into the life of grace, which is the life of communion. The boundary must be defined in a way that does not repel seekers, but instead invites persons to cross it. Through the process of Christian initiation, unbaptised adults travel through instruction in the faith (*catechesis*) through baptism and confirmation to full participation in the Eucharist. Infants and young children receive baptism first, being upheld by the faith of the Church and the undertakings of their sponsors or godparents, and subsequently (we trust) progress through instruction to confirmation and first communion (or in some Anglican churches, communion followed by confirmation). Thus adults and children alike are being drawn, step by step, ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Cor 3.18), deeper into communion with God and the Church.⁴ This calling, drawing and leading towards communion with God and one another in the body of Christ, within a sacramental continuum, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

9. The word ‘mission’ is often used colloquially as shorthand for evangelism or outreach to the unchurched. It usually refers to the Church being ‘sent’ into the world to bring Christ’s message of salvation to those who have not yet embraced it, to preach the gospel. Even where there is a richer, more adequate understanding of evangelisation, including Christian education and instruction

(*catechesis*), ‘the defence and confirmation of the gospel’ (i.e. ‘apologetics’; Phil 1.7), and service to the poor, the sick and the dispossessed, the focus of the word ‘mission’ is generally on the unchurched. But while outreach to non-Christians is a vital aspect of mission, it is not the whole of it. To identify mission with evangelism, without remainder, is an incomplete understanding of mission. Mission must include all that the Church is sent to do, including activities that, on the face of it, seem to belong to its ‘internal’ life. If we ask, ‘What is the Church placed here on earth to do?’, the answer must surely include: ‘To offer worship to God; to celebrate the sacraments; to pray for the needs of the world’ – worship, sacraments, intercession. Worship in spirit and in truth is what God desires (Jn 4.23–24), because God knows that to be brought into a state where we adore God’s grace and glory is our greatest good.

10. Christian worship clearly includes a ministry of word and sacrament, inseparably connected. To teach the faith and so to help to form disciples, baptising them into the body of Christ (Mt 28.19–20), brings together word and sacrament at the very heart of the Church’s mission. So to celebrate the liturgy, which is filled with word and sacrament, is part of the Church’s mission. The mission, in one major aspect, is liturgical. Christian initiation, sacramental through and through as it is, and culminating in the

Eucharist, is infused with worship, just as it is infused with faith. So it is something of an impoverishment to think of mission purely as an activity that the Church does to those outside, or even to regard it as simply the outward-facing aspect of the Church. What goes on at the heart of the Church's life – the celebration of the Eucharist with all its elements of praise, prayer, penitence, ministry of the word, confession of faith, intercession, sacrifice of thanksgiving, communion and dedication – belongs to the mission that God has entrusted to the Church. The outreach aspect of mission can only be the expression of the deepest meaning of the Church as the mystery of communion. It must spring from the eucharistic centre, for the Paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of the Son of God, shown forth or proclaimed in the Eucharist (1 Cor 11.26), is the heart of the message.

ii. Perhaps the most important thing for us to remember about 'mission' is that it does not belong to the Church. In mission the Church is not serving itself, but the kingdom or reign of God. Strictly speaking, the phrase 'the mission of the Church' is inappropriate, though it remains a piece of useful shorthand. It is God, not the Church, who has the mission. The mission belongs to the Triune God. It is the mission that God has to gather the whole created order into unity in Christ (Eph 1.10). The Church is called to serve that mission as a privileged instrument, and as a sign and

foretaste of what God's mission in the world intends to accomplish. So we should speak, not of 'the Church's mission', but rather of the Church's calling or role in the mission of God (*missio Dei*).

12. The mission of God is a trinitarian event of 'sending'. The Father sends the Son; the Father and Son together send the Spirit. Father, Son and Holy Spirit send the Church, and in sending the Church empower it for its task (Jn 14.26, 15.26, 16.7, 20.21-22).⁵ The mission of God is focused decisively in the coming of Christ; it is concentrated in the whole Christ event. For Christian faith, Jesus Christ, that is to say his identity and history, is the focal point, the culmination and the criterion of God's mission and purpose. Christ has come, once and for all, for the salvation of the world.

13. The credibility of the message, the proclamation of the gospel (*kerygma*), is strong when his own are 'one', as Jesus prays in John 17.21-23, but it is seriously compromised when his own are divided, for then how can the world 'know' that the Father has sent him? When the Church is visibly split it cannot speak with one voice and its divided state and divisive actions belie its message of reconciliation and communion. The remarkable Episcopal theologian William Porcher DuBose (1836-1918) held that Christian unity is 'of the essence of Christianity' and that Christianity and unity are 'identical things'.⁶

14. The inseparable biblical connection between communion and mission is revealed particularly clearly in the Fourth Gospel. There Jesus is portrayed as coming to unite (11.50–52) and as dying to make one (10.11, 14–16). He embraces his disciples in communion with the Father and with himself. Communion and mission are the twin imperatives for the Church, two sides of a coin. They should never be divorced. There has probably never been a time in the life of the Church when mission and communion together were not top priority, but they have never been more urgent than today when fellowship or communion is at a premium in the individualistic developed world and when militant secularism and aggressive atheism would like to bury the Christian faith once and for all.

15. The right way forward for the Anglican Communion in this challenging climate is to hold communion and mission tightly together in a single vision as *mission in communion*. This means acting as one body in carrying out Christ's command, to 'go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation' (Mk 16.15, longer ending). The kind of communion that Jesus Christ prayed for to his Father on the eve of his Passion is a communion that moves out in mission; and the mission that he commits to his disciples is a mission in communion.⁷

Notes

¹ From the Mandate of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith & Order (IASCUFO).

² Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (London: SCM Press, 1954), ch. 1, 'Community'.

⁴ See further Paul Avis (ed.), *The Journey of Christian Initiation: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives* (London: Church House Publishing, 2011).

⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), p. 390.

⁶ Cited by Robert Boak Slocum, *The Anglican Imagination: Portraits and Sketches of Modern Anglican Theologians* (Burlington, VT and Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), p. 29.

⁷ For more detailed exposition of this theme see the Anglican–Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission report *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* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 2014), pp. 11–14 (§§25–36) and Paul Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010), ch. 10, 'Forging Communion in the Face of Difference'.

