

European Phase Communiqué 2000

As a result of the decision of the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the Lambeth Conference of 1998, the first official international conversations between the two communions were held from 21-24 September 2000 in Norwich, England. This was the first round of the conversations of the Forum which brought together Anglicans and Baptists from the Churches in Europe. Future meetings will bring together representatives from Baptist and Anglican Churches in Asia (2001), Africa (2002), the Caribbean and the USA (both in 2003). A continuation committee made up of 4 Anglicans and 4 Baptists will attend all the regional consultations and will be responsible for drafting the report to be submitted to the BWA and the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in 2005.

The BWA and the ACC have agreed the following objectives for the conversations:

- To enable Anglicans and Baptists to learn from each other and to deepen mutual understanding of the relationships between the two Communion in the light of their histories.
- To share with each other our understandings of the faith and to work towards a common confession of the Apostolic Faith.
- To identify issues of doctrine and of the nature of the Church to be explored further in possible future conversations.
- To look for ways to co-operate in mission and community activities and increase our fellowship and common witness to the Gospel.

Representatives from England, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Scotland and Wales shared information on the particular histories of Anglicans and Baptists in these countries, including, the ways the two Churches have related in the past. Papers were also presented on aspects of Anglican and Baptist ecclesiological self-understanding, in the European region. From the discussions several areas emerged which will likely be explored in further conversations in the different regions. These included questions related to continuity/apostolicity, the place of statements of faith or confessions, Christian initiation, eucharist, recognition/reconciliation, the meaning of "local church", the nature of oversight, and approaches to mission, evangelism and pastoral care.

The years of grassroots ecumenical experience in local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs) in the British context contributed richly to the conversations. Nevertheless, the representatives acknowledged that the conversation would have been further enriched by more attention to the wider European reality. All felt that the discussions would be of help to local and regional bilateral conversations where they exist in Europe.

While at Norwich the members of the Forum worshipped together at Norwich Cathedral, and were grateful for the cordial welcome extended by the Dean and Chapter which contributed in no small way to the success and warmth of the meeting.

The following persons took part in the meeting:

Anglicans

The Revd Dr Bruce Matthews (Canada, co-chairman, continuation committee)
The Revd Preb Dr Paul Avis (England, continuation committee)
The Revd Dr Timothy Bradshaw (England)
Dr Martin Davie (England)
Mr Charles Gore (Scotland)
The Revd Susan Huyton (Wales)
Mr Dermot O'Callaghan (Ireland)
Bishop Samuel San Si Htay (Myanmar, continuation committee)
The Revd Andrew Sully (Wales)
The Revd Canon David Hamid (Anglican Communion Office co-secretary, continuation committee)

Baptists

Dr Paul Fiddes (England, co-chairman, continuation committee)
The Revd Gethin Abraham-Williams (Wales)
The Revd Myra Blyth (England)
The Revd Christopher Ellis (England)
Dr Timothy George (USA, continuation committee)
The Revd Anna Maffei (Italy)
Dr Kenneth Roxburgh (Scotland)
Dr Karl Heinz Walter (Germany)
Dr L.A. (Tony) Cupit (BWA, co-secretary, continuation committee).

Ms Rosemary Palmer, Anglican Communion Office, served as the administrative assistant.