

Anglican Lutheran International Commission

The third Anglican – Lutheran International Commission (ALIC) held its fourth meeting in Lilleskog, Sweden, between 20 and 27 May 2009, under the leadership of the Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, Primate of Canada, and of Reverend Dr. Cameron Harder, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, Canada, acting as Lutheran co-chair in the absence of Bishop Dr. Thomas Nyiwé, Cameroon, who was unable to attend. Commission members sent congratulations and best wishes to their colleague Professor Dr. Kirsten Busch Nielsen, who was ordained in Copenhagen during the meeting.

The meeting was hosted by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), in cooperation with the Church of Sweden and the Diocese of Skara.

This commission has met in Tanzania, Canada, and India. Sweden was chosen as the venue for this meeting in order to allow sustained engagement and deepening theological reflection on the theme of diakonia, which has been emerging as the central theme on which this commission wants to make its contribution. The discussion discovered strong links between the “six marks of mission,” which provide a framework for Anglican engagement in God’s mission, and developments in Lutheran understandings of diakonia, as seen in the *Diakonia in Context* handbook which Kjell Nordstokke from the LWF introduced to the group.

The life of the Christian Church has diaconal character, this commission believes. Using a diaconal lens has allowed the commission to examine issues of ecclesiology and ministry from fresh perspectives. Diakonia and koinonia (communion) are two faces of the same reality, two sides of the same coin on which God’s image is stamped. The commission believes that a renewed and full understanding of diakonia will strengthen the mission and unity of the Church at every level. God is now calling Anglicans and Lutherans to find concrete diaconal expressions for the growing communion between them.

The inseparable relationship of diakonia and communion is integral to the church in every context, but it is expressed in particular ways in each place. As part of its mandate, the commission received regional reports, which reflect a diversity of contexts, needs, and responses. The commission is learning that there is no single pattern for growth in communion; promising initiatives are found in many forms. In some places, the prophetic dimension of diakonia has particular urgency, and in fact is the leading impetus toward greater unity. In others, the most pressing challenge is to bring diakonia closer to the heart of the churches’ life together.

At this meeting, the commission was pleased to learn of a new agreement between Lutherans and Anglicans in Ecuador, the first such agreement in Latin America. Because the commission was hosted by a church which is a signatory of the Porvoo Agreement, it paid special attention to the opportunities and remaining challenges of this relationship. Commission members met with Rev. Barbara Moss at St. Andrew’s Anglican Church in Gothenburg and enjoyed dinner hosted by the Anglican Communion.

The commission was eager to learn about the changing forms of diaconal ministry in the Church of Sweden. On Monday 25 May the group explored a number of settings for diaconal work in Gothenburg. First it visited the Johanneskyrkan, where they were welcomed by Rev. Michel Casselblad. The Stadsmissionen has taken a church threatened with closure and made of it a place of joy and welcome. Open doors invite all people, including migrants, seafarers, the drug- and alcohol- dependent, university students and faculty, and others into a space where all can gather for coffee, fresh food, worship, and opportunities for the sorts of conversation which can bring transformation to their lives. The focal point of the worship space, a cross of many candles ascending the steps to the altar, provides an ecclesial image for the possibilities presented in the Twelve Step groups which find their home in the church. In the afternoon the group visited the Bräcke Diaconal Center, where Rev. Dr. Per Eckerdal explained the educational programs and the theology of diakonia and told stories of the life-changing possibilities presented by the diverse work of the Bräcke facilities. The Center is seeking ways to make diaconal ministry more directly an expression of church life at a time of massive change in church and society.

With the help of commission member Helene Tärneberg Steed, the group had a number of other opportunities for engagement with the Church of Sweden. The meeting began on Ascension Day, and the commission participated in a traditional outdoor Swedish worship service on a hilltop in the nearby town of Alingsås, celebrated by Rev. Thomas Lundblad and accompanied by the local brass band. In the evening, there was a Eucharist in the Lutheran tradition in the Lilleskog chapel; the Rev. Dr. Christopher Meaken, who directs the Theology and Ecumenical Affairs Department of the Church of Sweden, preached and presided. Afterwards Bishop emeritus Lars-Göran Lönnemark from the Skara Diocese presided at a dinner hosted by the Church of Sweden. Other guests were Mrs. Elisabeth Lönnemark, Rev. Göran Rask, International Secretary from the Diocese of Skara, who had coordinated the Commission's arrangements, and Rev. Esbjörn Särduquist, the Diocese's Theological Secretary.

On Sunday 24 May the Commission worshipped at the Cathedral of Skara, where Rev. Elisabeth Hillby welcomed the group. The commission learned about the thousand years of Christian history in this part of Sweden through visits to the Varnhem monastery location and to the Husaby Church and well, where it prayed at the waters of this ancient site where the first Christian king of Sweden Olof Skötkonung was baptized a millennium ago.

At its next meeting the commission will shape its report. It looks forward to identifying both its conclusions and its recommendations. The Anglican Communion will host the next meeting of the commission in Columbus, Ohio, USA, between 17-24 April 2010.

Members of the commission are:

Anglicans:

The Most Revd. Fred Hiltz, Canada (Co-Chair)

The Revd. Dr. Charlotte Methuen, Germany and United Kingdom

The Rt. Revd. Musonda T. S. Mamba, Botswana

The Revd. Professor Renta Nishihara, Japan
The Very Revd. William H. Petersen, USA
The Revd. Dr. Cathy Thomson, Australia

Consultant:

The Revd. Canon Dr. Alyson Barnett-Cowan, Canada (also acting as Anglican co-secretary)

Apology

The Revd. Dr. Günter Esser, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, Germany

Lutherans:

Rev. Dr. Cameron R. Harder, Canada (Acting Co-Chair)
Rev. Angel Furlan, Argentina
Landesbischof Jürgen Johannesdotter, Germany
Rev. Helene Tärneberg Steed, Sweden and Ireland
Professor Dr. Kathryn Johnson, Lutheran World Federation (Co-Secretary)

Consultants:

Professor Dr. Kenneth G. Appold, USA
Rt. Rev. Dr. Ndanganeni P. Phaswana, South Africa

Apologies:

Rev. Dr. Thomas Nyiwé, Cameroon (Co-Chair)
Professor Dr. Kirsten Busch Nielsen, Denmark

Administrative support was provided by Ms. Sybille Graumann of The Lutheran World Federation and Mr. Neil Vigers of the Anglican Communion Office.

The Commission was established by the Anglican Consultative Council and The Lutheran World Federation to continue the dialogue between Anglicans and Lutherans on the worldwide level which has been in progress since 1970. ALIC is building upon the work reflected in *The Niagara Report* (1987), focusing on the mission of the church and the role of the ordained ministry, *The Diaconate as Ecumenical Opportunity* (1995), and most recently *Growth in Communion* (2002), the report of the Anglican – Lutheran International Working Group (ALIWG), which reviewed the extensive regional agreements which have established close relations between Anglican and Lutheran churches in several parts of the world.