

Anglican Lutheran International Commission

The Third Anglican – Lutheran International Commission (ALIC) held its third meeting at Chennai, India, between 28 April and 5 May 2008, under the co-chairmanship of the Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, Primate of Canada, and of Reverend Dr. Cameron Harder, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, Canada, in the absence of Bishop Thomas Nyiwé, Cameroon, who was unable to attend.

The meeting was hosted by The Lutheran World Federation, in co-operation with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India. Its Executive Secretary, Reverend Dr. A. G. Augustine Jeyakumar, welcomed the group at an opening dinner, and the UELCI was host for an excursion to the temple sites at Mamallapuram and dinner there. On Sunday 4 May commission members attended the Broadway Congregation of The Arcot Lutheran Church and visited Chennai sites associated with the memory of the Apostle Thomas. On Ascension Day, the commission worshipped in the chapel of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute and heard about ecumenical education in this setting from members of its faculty: Reverend Dr. Ponniah Manoharan, Director and Professor in Christian Ministry, Reverend Dr. Jacob Thomas, Professor of Systematic Theology, and Reverend Dr. David Udayakumar, Professor of Mission and Ecumenism. The commission was also welcomed by Bishop V. Devasahayam, Bishop in Madras of the Church of South India, who guided the group in a tour of St. George's Cathedral and welcomed it to a programme of dance by children from the Cathedral's Bible schools. He also challenged the commission and its communions to take seriously the injustices caused by the persistence of caste in Indian society.

The commission received reports from various regions where Anglicans and Lutherans live in covenanted relationship. It welcomed the re-activation of the All Africa Anglican – Lutheran Commission (AAALC), which had met in Johannesburg in December 2007, and received a report from the co-chairs, the Right Reverend Musonda Mwamba and Bishop Ndanganeni Phaswana. The commission sent greetings to Nippon Sei Ko Kai, a member of the Anglican Communion, and to the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, a member of the LWF, as they gather together for worship on Pentecost Sunday; commission member Reverend Professor Renta Nishihara will speak about the dialogue between the communions.

The commission's work in Chennai continued discussions begun in earlier meetings: the character of the visible unity the commission seeks to commend, the developing ecclesiologies of the two communions, their understandings of ordained ministry in the context of the life of the Church, and the centrality of diakonia to the Church's mission. Reflection on diakonia was enriched by presentations from Reverend Dr. Kjell Nordstokke, Director of the Department for Mission and Development at the LWF, and the Reverend David Peck, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for International Development; they reviewed the work undertaken by the two communions in these areas and asked about ways in which this work might be helpful to the quest for greater visible unity.

At this meeting discussion centred on the shape and direction of the commission's report, which is mandated to make recommendations about ways in which the two communions can move toward more visible unity. The commission recognised diakonia and communion as the central elements of their discernment. The challenge of proclamation and service embodied in diakonia, modelled on the ministry of Jesus, promises a fresh and dynamic entry point into questions of ministry and unity in the service of the Gospel.

We give thanks to God for the witness of the UELCI and the Church of South India in their country, and for the ministry of diakonia in which they engage. We were profoundly moved by their accounts of societal discrimination against Dalits which the churches' ministry seeks to transform, and resolve to remember these issues as we return to our own contexts. We pray that God will bless and guide all we met here, and also the life of both communions as we seek to proclaim the Gospel in active service and mission.

The commission plans to meet again between 18-26 May 2009 at a venue to be identified by the LWF.

The 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. Mwamba, Botswana
The Revd. Professor Renta Nishihara, Japan (*unable to be present*)
The Very Revd. William H. Petersen, USA
The Revd. Dr. Cathy Thomson, Australia
The Revd. Canon Gregory K. Cameron, Anglican Communion Office (Co-Secretary)

Consultants:

The Revd. Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, Canada
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)
Professor Dr. Kirsten Busch Nielsen, Denmark
Rev. Angel Furlan, Argentina
Landesbischof Jürgen Johannesdotter, Germany
Rev. Dr. Thomas Nyiwé, Cameroon (Co-Chair; *unable to be present*)
Rev. Helene Tärneberg Steed, Sweden and Ireland
Professor Dr. Kathryn Johnson, Lutheran World Federation (Co-Secretary)

Consultants:

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

Administrative support was provided by Ms. Sybille Graumann of The Lutheran World Federation and the Reverend Terrie Robinson 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 world-wide 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.