

C H U R C H   A N D   C O M M U N I O N   P A R T   ISTORRINGTON-BIRMINGHAM DRAFT

I	1 - 4	INTRODUCTION
II	5 - 9	COMMUNION - UNFOLDED IN SCRIPTURE
III	10 - 13	COMMUNION - SACRAMENTALITY AND THE CHURCH The Church as Sacrament The Church as Sign The Church as Instrument
IV	14 - 18	COMMUNION - APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND THE CHURCH
V	19 - 26	COMMUNION - CATHOLICITY AND THE CHURCH
VI	27 - 35	UNITY AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNION Elements of Ecclesial Communion
VII	36	CONCLUSION

## I INTRODUCTION

1. Together with other Christians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are committed to the search for that unity in truth for which Christ prayed. Within this context, the purpose of ARCIC has been to seek to remove those obstacles which hinder communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Following the Final Report of ARCIC-I and the publication of ARCIC-II's statement on Salvation and the Church, it has become clear that we have made significant progress in growth towards that full ecclesial communion. We believe it is time now to reflect upon the nature of communion and to evaluate the degree of communion we already experience. This perspective of communion helps us to see clearly not only the scandal of our divisions but also ways towards healing them. Moreover, we believe the outstanding difficulties between us will be most helpfully viewed and most likely resolved within this perspective.

2. In the New Testament the vision of communion is conveyed in many ways. A variety of words, expressions and images point to its reality: the people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10), flock (John 10:14; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:3,4), body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), vine (John 15:5), temple (1 Corinthians 3: 16-17), bride (Revelation 21:2). All of them imply relationship with Christ or with God. Some of these, such as flock and body, also imply a relationship between the members of the community. The Greek word koinonia,

together with its cognates, is not always used in the New Testament with precisely the same connotation but it usually signifies participation (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:16). Yet it commends itself as the most expressive term to describe our relationship with God and with one another in Christ. This usage is explicit in the Johannine writings: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship (koinonia) with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3, cp. 1 John 1:7). Communion is the profound all-embracing reality of a shared life in Christ (John 17; 1 Corinthians 10:16-21) of which no one model or image is an exhaustive description.

3. Every account of the Church as communion necessarily implies a fundamental relationship to Christ. He is the leader of God's people, the shepherd of the flock, the head of the body, the stem of the vine, the corner-stone of the temple, the heavenly bridegroom. Similarly, it is characteristic of the apostle Paul to speak of the relationship of believers to their Lord as being 'in Christ' (Romans 8:1; Colossians 1:28; 2 Corinthians 5:17). He also speaks of Christ being in the believer (Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:28; Colossians 1:27).

4. It is clear, therefore, that communion includes far more than an institutional or juridical relationship between Christian communities. It expresses a unity that stems from the relationship that Christians enjoy with God in Christ, which will reach its fulfilment when God will be all in all

(1 Corinthians 15:28). It is the will of God for the whole of his creation, that all things should be brought to ultimate unity in Christ (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:19-20). The Church is sign, instrument and sacrament of that profound communion and oneness. Consequently, communion most aptly expresses the fundamental nature of the Church.

## II COMMUNION - UNFOLDED IN SCRIPTURE

5. The drama of humanity, as expounded in scripture, is of the formation, breakdown and renewal of relationships. Thus Adam and Eve are created to find fulfilment in communion with each other and with God. Their disobedience undermines both their relationship with God and their relationship with each other: they hide from God; Adam blames Eve; they are excluded from the garden; their relationship with the rest of creation is distorted: the unfolding narrative in Genesis indicates that this is the way of all humanity.

6. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments bear witness that, in faithfulness to his eternal purpose, God continues to will the salvation of all creation. The divine purpose is re-affirmed in covenant with his people. Through Abraham God gives the promise of blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:1-3). Through Moses God establishes a people as his own possession, a community in a covenant relationship with him (Exodus 19:5ff). The prophets consistently denounce the community's faithlessness as threatening this relationship. Nevertheless, God's fidelity remains constant

and he promises through the prophets that his purpose will be accomplished. Although division and exile have followed upon the failures of the chosen people, reconciliation of the scattered people of God will spring from a radical transformation within a new covenant (Jer. 31:31). God will raise up a servant to fulfil his purpose of communion and peace for all the nations (Isaiah 49:6; cp also Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 2:10-13).

7. In the fullness of time, God sends his Son, born of Mary, to redeem his people and bring them into a new relationship as his adopted children. When Jesus begins his ministry he called together a band of disciples with whom he shares his apostolic mission. In the light of Easter they are to be witnesses to his life and teaching, death and resurrection. In the power of the Spirit given at Pentecost they proclaim that God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ. By a baptism of repentance and faith believers are brought into communion with God and one another (Acts 2 esp. vv 38, 42). The baptism bestowed in this New Covenant is more than the restoration of that which was lost: by the Spirit believers enter Christ's own communion with the Father (cf Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). Through the victory of the Cross all estrangement occasioned by differences of culture, race, class, privilege and sex is being overcome. In Christ all have equal standing before God (Galatians 3:27-29; Colossians 3:11). Moreover, because Christ is the one in and through whom all things are created and reconciled, the proper relationship between humanity and the rest of creation is restored in him and renewed (Colossians

1:15-20).

8. This gift of communion is embodied in the people of the New Covenant. This is the mystery of the Church, 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Peter 2: 9,10). However this life of communion is constantly weakened by human sin. The failure of Christians to respond to the evangelical demands of love and justice, righteousness and holiness, impair the life of communion. Divisions within and between Christian communities obscure the Church's witness. Communion will be perfectly realized only in the fullness of the kingdom of God.

9. Nevertheless the Scriptures speak of an authentic participation in the Kingdom here and now (Mark 1:15, Luke 11:20). Its culmination is described as a feast, 'the wedding supper of the Lamb', a vivid image of communion deeply rooted in human experience (Is. 25:6, Luke 22:30, Rev. 19:9). This feast is spoken of by Jesus in the parables and foreshadowed in the feeding of the multitudes. In the life of the Church throughout the ages the celebration of the Eucharist prefigures and provides a true foretaste of this messianic banquet. In the world to come, such signs will cease since the sacramental order will no longer be needed, for God will be immediately present to his people. They will see him face to face (Revelation 22:4). This will be the perfection of communion. Thus the communion of human beings with God, with one another, and with the whole creation has an eschatological character.

### III COMMUNION -SACRAMENTALITY AND THE CHURCH

#### 10. The Church as Sacrament

God's purpose is to bring the whole of creation into communion with himself. To accomplish this the Eternal Word became incarnate. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ definitively manifested the restored humanity that God intends. By what he taught and by what he accomplished through the cross and resurrection, he became both sign and instrument of the realization of God's purpose for the whole of creation. The risen Christ as the new Adam, the source of life in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:46), is the beginning and guarantor of this transformation.

By this transformation the harshest alienations of humanity are superseded by a profound communion, not only between human beings but supremely between them and God. These two forms of communion are ultimately inseparable. This is the mystery of Christ (Romans 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-11). In the design of God the harmony and love required between individuals, races and cultures must be rooted in this communion with God himself and sustained and fostered by it. Wherever human relationships exhibit depth of mutual love, where there is one heart and mind, a sharing not only of goods but also of joys and sorrows, God is there. This is what the mystery of Christ Jesus is to accomplish and perfect. However, human relationships in their fragility

are always under threat. God in his mercy continues through the work of the Holy Spirit to make available the means of grace whereby communion can be maintained and nourished and restored. That part of humanity which through faith acknowledges and accepts this gift of God is joined with Christ in the manifestation and extension of communion. In the new Adam the responsibility and dignity of human kind, made in the image of God, have been restored and are constantly being renewed by the Spirit of Christ. The Church is this community of faith, incorporated into Christ through baptism, that has become his Body, "the fulness of him who fills the whole creation" (Eph. 1:23). Consequently the Church displays for all time the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to humanity in Christ Jesus (cp. Eph. 2:6-7). The Church in its entirety is therefore the sacrament of this mystery. It proclaims and makes manifest that the unity of humanity is restored only by the grace of God. This is what is celebrated in the thanksgiving of the liturgy and in the administration of the sacraments. The Church is that community where through word and sacraments Christ gives the grace necessary to transcend human frailty.

11. The Church, through its communion with God and its common life in the Spirit, is sign, a visible manifestation of the mysterious presence of the Kingdom. At the same time, by the preaching of the word, through the celebration of the sacraments, the work of intercession, the ministry of pastoral care, the witness of all the faithful and their involvement in evangelization, the Church is the instrument



of God for his Kingdom. When we speak of the Church as sacrament, we mean that its very existence is both a sign of the mystery of Christ and also the instrument of his Spirit. By God's gift to the Church of the same Spirit who was at work in the earthly ministry of Jesus, the Church thus shares in attaining the goal of Christ's mission. The mandate of God given to Christ to bring salvation to all the nations of the earth can only be achieved through the instrumentality of the Church. This constitutes the unique mission of the Church.

## 12. The Church as Sign

The Church as communion of believers with God and with each other is a sign of the new humanity that God is re-creating and a pledge of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. It signifies the gift of participation in the new life in Christ and the offer of forgiveness that is received through faith. Those who are baptized devote themselves to "the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship (koinonia), to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42), and also to the diffusion of the gospel (cf. Acts 8:4). This communion is not solely between God and individual believers. It involves all human relationships as Christians serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13). This is also shown in the sharing of material resources, which is a true dimension of communion within the life of Christ (Roman 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:8-9; cf. Acts 2:44-45, 4:32; Galatians 6:6). Because Christ overcame all the barriers of division created by human sin, the Christian community has

entered into the struggle to end those divisions (cf. Ephesians 2:14-18, 5:1,2). Thus the Church is far more than a voluntary coming together of justified individuals, for in it Christ is for ever present and acting through the Spirit. It is the community where the redemptive work of Jesus Christ both has been appropriated and is being revealed to the world. The Church is the sign of what God has done in Christ, is continuing to do for those who serve him, and wills to do for all humanity. Still more, it is the sign of God's abiding presence, the pledge of his eternal faithfulness, till God be all in all.

### 13. The Church as Instrument

When the gospel according to St. Matthew concludes with the words "go and make disciples of all the nations" (28:19), it indicates that with the ascension of Christ the responsibility for growth in grace and the spread of salvation lies with the Church in the power of his presence assured by the Spirit. This is evident in the dispensation of the sacraments of the Church. In them, God the Father bestows the riches of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Similarly, in the Church's ministry of the word, God proclaims through the Spirit the good news of salvation once for all achieved by Christ. So, through the Church's ministry of word and sacraments, through its perception of the world's needs and through the commitment of its members, Christ is present, continuing and extending his ministry. In all the service and suffering of the members of the Church for God's glory, Christ himself, the Saviour of the

world, is involved. What Paul says of himself is true for all: "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions" (Col. 1:24). Thus the sufferings and anguish of the Church are not only an instrument of sanctification for its own members: they are also instruments of God for the evangelisation of the world. To be the Church is to share sacrificially in partnership (koinonia) in the Gospel (Phil. 1:5).

#### IV COMMUNION - APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND THE CHURCH

14. The Church of God is built on the proclamation and confession of faith. The content and object of this faith is the truth of Jesus Christ to which the apostolic community bore witness by its life and teaching. No-one may change this apostolic tradition against which everything that the Church does and decides is to be continually measured. Indissolubly linked to this God-given deposit of faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church to preserve and keep alive the memory of the teaching, work and exaltation of Christ to which the apostolic community bore witness.

This memory of Christ, realized in every age and culture, constitutes the living tradition of the Church. Thus the apostolic tradition is necessarily fundamental to the communion which spans time and place.

15. The living memory of Christ is to be found within the Church as a whole. This memory is actualized in the

constant confession and celebration of the apostolic faith by the Christian community. As the social setting of the Christian community changes, so the questions it has to face both from within and without constantly change. Even within the Scriptures new images and language are used to express the faith as it is handed on to new generations of believers. For the Church to remain the same, rooted and grounded in the truth, it must develop new expressions of the faith in conformity with the tradition it has received from the apostles. Within this living process individuals and groups play their part. Their insights have to be tested and integrated into the life and faith of the whole Church.

16. Because this faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3) is lived out in an ever-changing variety of time, place and culture, tensions inevitably appear. Diversity of culture will also elicit a proper diversity in the faithful expression of the one Gospel. Even within the same community there will be differences of perception and practice in complex matters, calling for right discernment of obedience to the faith.

Such tensions can be creative of healthy development. They can also cause a loss of continuity with apostolic tradition, estrangement from other parts of the Church, and disruption within the community. When such differences become embodied in separated ecclesial communities, so that Christians are no longer able to receive, celebrate and pass on the truth within community of faith, all are impoverished and the living memory of the

Church becomes obscured. As Christians grow apart, complementary aspects of the one truth are perceived as mutually incompatible. Although the unity and peace of the Church are constantly under threat, the Church is sustained by Christ's promise of its perseverance in the truth (cf Matt.16:18). This promise is fulfilled in the action of the Holy Spirit who maintains the living memory of Christ among his people (cf John 14:26).

17. By formally recognizing the canon of Scripture as the normative record of the revelation of God, the Church sealed its acceptance of the apostolic tradition as authoritative. Through the Spirit of Christ this tradition is a living reality in the Church, celebrated in word and sacrament. Accordingly, in the eucharistic memorial in which the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is re-presented, the Scriptures have always been read.

18. The obligation to preach the apostolic faith, to explain and apply its message is a primary function of the ordained ministry. Part of the responsibility of this ministry is to nurture and keep the People of God in their obedience to the apostolic faith. Since the living memory of the Church is fostered by the Holy Spirit within the whole people of God, the individual Christian conscience is also being moulded by the same Spirit. The task of the ordained ministry includes listening and discerning in order to assist the people of God in the articulation of their faith. It also involves both making the Universal Church aware of the perceptions and circumstances of the local

churches, and helping the local churches to maintain their place within the universal communion. The richness of the Church as a whole is made up of the communion of all its parts.

#### V COMMUNION - CATHOLICITY AND THE CHURCH

19. The Church has always confessed that it is catholic. The Gospel is to be proclaimed to all nations until the end of the world (cp. Matt. 28:19). In every age and in every place the Church is called to be the communion in Jesus Christ of all who come to him, with all the gifts and graces with which God has endowed them. The Catholicity of God's love demands that in the Church there is to be room for all the diverse gifts and graces given by God his people.

20. Diversity has been, is, and always will be found within the Church. For instance, decisions reached at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) affirmed the legitimacy as well as the limits of such diversity. What is unacceptable is that diversity should become a cause of the kind of division that leads to schism. While the quest for unity must not issue in the imposition of uniformity in all matters, neither ought pluriformity be allowed to produce fragmentation in the Church. Such diversity is evident in variety of liturgies and forms of spirituality, in variety of disciplines and ways of exercising authority, in variety of theological approaches and forms of doctrinal expression. Since these differences can complement one another, they

demonstrate that, as the result of communion with God in Christ, diversity need not lead to division. It reflects the generosity of God the Creator. This variety also manifests the transcendence of the mystery of salvation in that no human expression can ever fully plumb its depths.

21. The particular gifts that each member receives are for the building up of the whole body of Christ. Every Christian is called to contribute to the life and the service of the whole community (1 Cor. 12:4ff; 1 Peter 4:10ff). In a similar way the different Christian communities are called to share with one another their special gifts and resources, spiritual as well as material. Amid all the diversity of traditions and cultures the Church is called to maintain her unity and coherence by the common confession of the one apostolic faith, a shared sacramental life, a ministry of oversight and joint ways of reaching decisions and teaching with authority. Thus those who have the ministry of oversight are not only responsible for guarding, co-ordinating and promoting the diverse gifts in each local community; they have a similar responsibility with regard to the distinctive traditions of the churches, while at the same time safeguarding the fundamental unity of the whole people of God.

22. The communion of the Church is threatened, in the first place, when the truth of the faith is denied from within the community. The apostolic tradition always remains normative. Where there is rejection of any of its essential

elements or when its content is gravely distorted, such disharmony becomes divisive. It is vital for the Church to distinguish between what is necessary and sufficient in order to remain faithful to the truth of the gospel and what is not. It is also vital to distinguish among the variety of theological expressions of doctrine those that may be recognized as adequate and legitimate.

23. Communion is also threatened wherever the faith is denied by life and conduct. Just as the Church has to distinguish between tolerable and intolerable diversity in the doctrinal expression of the apostolic faith, so in its practical life it has to discover what is disruptive of communion.

The Old Testament prophets repeatedly called for justice. Justice is fundamental to the pattern both of God's first creation and also of the new creation in Jesus Christ. According to the teaching of Jesus the failure to respond with compassion to the consequences of injustice will be a decisive factor in the final judgement (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 10:29-37). Racism, exploitation of the poor, every form of discrimination and destruction of the environment, contradict the message of the gospel. The Church is called to be an authentic witness to the communion of the Kingdom by its practical demonstration of compassion and justice. It must also be a sign and instrument of justice in its own life. Only in this way can it be a credible prophetic voice.



24. The life of the Church is also threatened by other kinds of behaviour that contradict the example and command of Christ - 'fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party-spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like' (Gal. 5:19f). These undermine the credibility of the Church as God's people drawn together by the Holy Spirit in communion. The body of Christ has to reflect the holiness and wholeness of its head, 'by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together' (Ephesians 4:16).

25. The Gospel of Christ calls for mutual forbearance, submission, gentleness and love, the placing of the interests of others above the interests of self, making room for each other in the body of Christ (2 Cor. 7:2; Col. 3:12-13; Phil. 2:1f). The Church cannot fulfil its mission without every effort being made to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). It is precisely here that ministries of unity are required to protect and promote communion, to discern when the limits of diversity have been over-reached and to rectify what has become disruptive.

26. In the eucharist the Church manifests not only its own communion but also its solidarity with the whole of humanity. This is given expression in the liturgy, especially by the mutual forgiveness of sins, the sign of peace, the intercession for all, the sharing of the eucharistic elements, the going out together to witness to Christ and to serve the world. But how can Christians

properly meet at the same eucharist, around the same table, and partake the same bread when they are not in love and charity with one another and disagree in matters of faith? Lack of love, divisions of faith and order, subvert the communion expressed in the eucharist. The truth, justice and love of Christ may be obscured to such an extent that it becomes impossible for Christians to celebrate the eucharist together with integrity and honesty. Without a common eucharist the unity entered through baptism is impaired, ecclesial communion is broken and the sign of the unity of the Kingdom is obscured.

## VI UNITY AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

27. The Church has always confessed its unity grounded in the gift of the one Spirit received in baptism (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:12f; Eph. 4:4f). Because there is only one Lord, with whom we are called to have communion, God has given his Church one gospel, one faith, one baptism, one eucharist, and one apostolic ministry through which Christ continues to nurture and watch over his flock. Christians, therefore, can never complacently acquiesce in a disunity that impairs their communion with God.

28. From the beginning the Church has been affected by geographical, cultural and linguistic diversity. Differences in interpretation of scripture and in practice can lead to schism. The unity of the Church has therefore needed to be defended as well as nurtured. From apostolic times this has been a primary role of the ordained ministry,

especially of the bishops who are "responsible for preserving and promoting the integrity of the koinonia to further the Church's response to the Lordship of Christ and its commitment to mission" (Final Report, Authority I,5, p.54). It is the special task of such ministers to discern and express the authoritative teaching of the apostolic faith and thus to maintain and deepen communion within and between the local churches.

29. Different means have been used to express, preserve and foster communion, especially when the Church has been faced with grave disagreement. Communication has been maintained by the exchange of episcopal letters. In the early Church, local churches recognized the necessity of maintaining communion with the principal Sees, especially with the Bishop of Rome. The practice of holding synods or councils (first local, later ecumenical) came from the need for mutual consultation and common decision-making.

Life in self-sufficient isolation is for the local church the denial of its very being. Whether in times of dispute or not, this is the reason why bishops of other local churches participate in episcopal ordinations. Even when ecclesial communion has been broken, the desire for such communion has never been wholly lost. Communion of the local church with neighbouring churches and with the universal Church is an essential part of the integrity of the Church's self-understanding.

30. The Church confesses itself to be 'apostolic' because it is founded upon the faith of the apostles and because it

proclaims that faith in apostolic mission. Bishops, whether in their dioceses or gathered in councils, have a particular responsibility to maintain and express the communion and unity of the churches. They fulfil this task primarily by keeping their community faithful to the apostolic teaching. In the early Church this apostolic continuity was not only expressed by the careful transmission of the Holy Scripture but also by keeping lists of episcopal succession. Such lists witnessed to the apostolic succession in faith of particular local churches, and already in the late second century Irenaeus makes clear that amongst such lists that of the bishops of Rome has special significance. Fundamental to the Church's self-understanding is this sense of communion through time. This is also expressed through faith in the "Communion of Saints", whereby the Church declares its conviction that the eucharistic community on earth is itself a participation in a larger communion which includes the martyrs and confessors and all who have fallen asleep in Christ throughout the ages.

### 31. Elements of Ecclesial Communion

The profound communion which is the work of the Spirit must be embodied in a visible community. Shared discipleship needs to be manifested in a discernible manner. It is totally inadequate to speak only of an invisible unity as the fulfilment of Christ's will for his Church. The purpose of the visible ecclesial community is to promote communion with God and to proclaim the apostolic witness

that in the Son the Father has reconciled the world to himself and has entrusted to the Church the ministry of reconciliation.

32. To the communion of the Church belong certain constitutive elements rooted in the common confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. From apostolic times they have been discerned in the life of the Church: 'So those who received (Peter's) words were baptized....And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:41-42).

33. The necessary constitutive elements for full ecclesial communion include:

The common acceptance and practice of one baptism with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;

The mutual acknowledgement by churches of each other as professing and teaching the one apostolic faith, revealed in the Scriptures, set forth in the Creeds, and attested by the ancient common traditions. In particular they profess a common faith in the Holy Trinity. They believe in God the Father and in his Son Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, truly divine and truly human. They believe in the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God;

Their fellowship in which they acknowledge each other's ministers as true ministers of Christ, not only in terms of the spiritual fruitfulness of such ministry but also of its authentic apostolic nature and continuity. For the sake of the communion they also acknowledge common

organs of authority, endowed by the Spirit to speak for all and to all in matters of faith and conduct. These include locally, regionally and universally a common ministry of oversight exercised collegially and primatially and grounded in the life of the community in such a way as to be open to its participation in the discovery of God's will. They also acknowledge the same basic moral values and the same vision of humanity created in the image of God as constitutive of life in communion;

The sacramental expression of a shared faith and life in the common celebration of the eucharist. Communion, indeed, comes to its fulfilment in the eucharist (cp 1 Cor. 10:17). Moreover, it is manifested in shared concern for the poor and the powerless, for justice and peace on earth, in mutual support and assistance (Cp. Acts 2:44). It is further demonstrated in a shared commitment to the mission entrusted by Christ to his Church - "may they be one in order that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).

34. These inter-related elements, some of which are not yet mutually recognised, are constitutive of full ecclesial communion. They must all be present in order for one church to be able to recognize another as a sister church. This does not mean that a community in which these elements are present actually lives fully by them. Strictly speaking, communion within and between local churches will only reach its perfection in the fullness of the kingdom of heaven. It has to deepen and grow until the last day. Within the pilgrim Church on earth, even when local churches are united

in full ecclesial communion, Christians will be obliged to seek ever deeper communion with God and with one another.. This is part of their commitment to Christ. The Church may never forget that it is Christ himself who seeks constantly by and through it to bring salvation and reconciliation to the whole of humanity. Hence lies the supreme importance of the pursuit of the ecumenical path.

35. It is important to recognize the large degree of fundamental accord that already exists between our two communions and the progress in mutual understanding that has been achieved.

A significant measure of communion is already experienced by separated Christians as the fruit of the communion shared with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The walls of ecclesial separation do not reach as high as heaven. The present challenge to Anglicans and Roman Catholics, indeed to all Christians, is to heal the divisions in faith and practice that make it impossible to live a common eucharistic life.

## VII - CONCLUSION

36. This concludes a first stage of our consideration of the Church as communion, a study which began during the work of ARCIC-I. It contains basic doctrinal perspectives on the nature of the Church which are shared by our two communions. A further stage is envisaged in which we shall examine the outstanding divisive issues in the light of the present document.

After the publication of ARCIC-I's Final Report and ARCIC-II's Statement on Salvation and the Church, concern was expressed in many quarters about the ecclesiological basis of our work. The importance of this subject is underlined by the growing awareness that all ecumenical endeavour depends upon the way the nature, constitution and mission of the Church are understood. This document shows that, despite the continuing obstacles, our two communions share a great measure of agreement on what Christ intends his Church to be. This should enable us to examine our present difficulties with hope rather than despair because of our common certitude regarding the goal.

The progress already made must not be forfeited, even if the ultimate goal appears more remote than it was at the end of ARCIC-I. Even apparently insuperable obstacles must not delude us into thinking that there is no further room for advance. On the contrary, there are numerous areas where growth in mutual understanding and sharing are open.

In our subsequent work we shall seek to deal realistically with remaining divisive issues, confident that this will help to promote our growth in communion.

---