

Guidance Document

Frequently asked questions about
The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in IASCUFO's work on *The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals*.

The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals (NCPs) is a theological paper that offers a framework for fostering Christian unity and deepening communion amid difference and division.

The NCPs was published in Advent 2024. The paper is the result of a long-term piece of work, commissioned at the Anglican Consultative Council in 2023, to do a renewed exploration of "structure and decision-making to help address our differences in the Anglican Communion."

The ACC resolution underlined "the importance of seeking to walk together to the highest degree possible and learning from our ecumenical conversations how to accommodate differentiation patiently and respectfully."

Since 2024, IASCUFO have published a *Supplement*, that offers some refinements to the original proposals.

The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals will be discussed at the next ACC meeting, which will be held in Belfast in 2026.

The present guidance document gives an overview of the recommendations and offers responses to some frequently asked questions. It has been developed as an accompaniment piece to IASCUFO's key documents.

Read the full proposals

There are two papers to read, that share IASCUFO's work:

- *The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals* (published February 2024)
- *The Supplement* paper (published March 2026)

To read the full documents and watch a film about IASCUFO's work visit:
anglicancommunion.org/nairobi-cairo-proposals

What are the proposals?

Q1 What are *The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals*?

The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals — or NCPs — are a major theological document published in 2024 that asks a fundamental question: what does it mean to be the Anglican Communion today? It lays out a fresh framework for how Anglican churches around the world can deepen their unity — not by pretending differences don't exist, but by finding better ways to walk together despite them. It also makes some practical recommendations about how the Communion describes itself and how leadership is shared. It's going to be the central item of business at the next Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Belfast in 2026.

Q2 What is the Supplement to *The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals*?

The Supplement (published March 2026) was developed following IASCUFO's meeting in Rome in 2026 and revisits the original proposals in light of feedback the Commission received. In a couple of areas, it refines key recommendations. The two papers may well be combined into a single document after ACC-19.

Q3 Who wrote/published these papers?

The papers come from IASCUFO — the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order. It's a permanent body of Anglican theologians drawn from around the world. The voices of the commission represent a range of perspectives.

Q4 Who commissioned *The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals*?

The commission was given this task by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) at its 2023 meeting in Ghana. It also builds on a call from the 2022 Lambeth Conference to look at the 'Instruments of Communion' and ask honestly: are they still fit for purpose?

The ACC process and decisions

Q5 What is the Anglican Consultative Council and who has a say in this?

The ACC is one of the four Instruments of Communion — essentially, one of the key bodies that fosters unity and mission in the Anglican Communion. When the ACC meets, it brings together a diversity of Anglican voices: two or three representatives from each member church, one of whom must be a lay person. The other three Instruments of Communion are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, and the Primates' Meeting.

Q6 Do individual churches have to adopt these proposals themselves?

No. Individual member churches do not need to vote on this in their own synods. The proposals relate to how the Communion as a whole describes itself and how the Instruments work. Churches are warmly encouraged to engage with the ideas, but there's no obligation — and no constitutional implications for member churches.

Summarising the proposals

Q7 What are the main things these proposals are recommending?

At heart, there are two proposals. First, updating how the Communion describes itself, so that the language we use accurately reflects what the Communion actually is today, rather than what it was a century ago. And second, broadening the leadership of the Communion's key bodies or Instruments so that they better reflect the global diversity of Anglicanism.

Q8 What changed between the original proposals and the *Supplement*?

The main revision is about how leadership is shared. Originally, in their paper of 2024, IASCUFO proposed a rotating presidency of the ACC. After further reflection and consultation, the commission moved to a more nuanced approach: inviting the regional primates to share more in the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury across the Communion. The Supplement Paper of 2026 presents these updates. There's also a proposal to simplify the ACC's structure by removing the largely ceremonial role of President. These are refinements, not a change of direction.

Questions about the proposals to update the description of the Anglican Communion

Q9

Does saying Anglicans ‘seek’ to uphold the faith weaken the Communion’s commitment to the Gospel?

Not at all. St Paul writes in Ephesians that we must grow into the unity of the faith. That’s the language of aspiration and journey — not of failure or relativism. Using the word *seek* is an act of honesty, not weakness. It says: we hold the faith, we are committed to it, and we recognise that full unity is still something we are working towards together.

Q10

Does this turn the Anglican Communion into a loose federation?

No. In fact, the proposals are explicit on this point. The Communion is held together by real, living bonds, not just historical accident. Those bonds include shared faith, shared liturgy, shared patterns of ministry and service, a commitment to taking counsel together, and the historic and ongoing connection with Canterbury. A federation is an association of convenience. What IASCUFO is describing is something much more substantial: a communion of churches genuinely called to walk together.

Q11

When you say, ‘historic connection with Canterbury,’ does that mean the relationship is just history?

The phrase *historic connection with Canterbury* points in three directions at once: the origins of many churches in the Communion, Canterbury’s place as a symbol of ancient apostolicity, and — crucially — a continuing, present-day relationship with the Archbishop of Canterbury as a personal and pastoral gift to the Communion. This is a living connection and not only about the past.

Q12

Is this a postcolonial rewriting of Anglican identity?

The ACC and the Primates’ Meeting were both founded in the late twentieth century and made the Communion less Canterbury-centric, giving equal standing to all member churches. The Church of England-at-the-centre model belonged to a different era. Today, the majority of Anglicans live in the Global South. Any honest account of the Communion must start from that reality. The proposals are catching up with history, not rewriting it.

Q13

Are these proposals designed to keep churches from leaving the Communion?

No. IASCUFO's membership spans the full spectrum of Anglican opinion — from the most traditional to the most progressive. The proposals challenge everyone, not just those who might be inclined to leave. The fact that the responses to these papers have also come from all directions indicates that they're genuinely trying to hold the centre, not to tilt it one way or another.

Q14

Do the NCPs open the door to Anglican churches not currently recognised as part of the Anglican Communion to join?

No. The NCPs reaffirm the current process by which new member churches may be added to the Schedule of the ACC, as set forth in its Constitution. Any church seeking membership is considered and decided by the Standing Committee, with the assent of two-thirds of the Primates. There's also an important ecumenical principle whereby Anglicans have generally avoided having 'parallel geographical jurisdictions.' Certainly, it's hard to imagine two member churches in the same region or territory. For that to arise, there would need to be a robust shared commitment to communion and concord, even if they still disagree in certain respects.

Q15

Is IASCUFO's revised description of the Anglican Communion ecumenical?

Yes. The ACC specifically asked IASCUFO to learn from the Communion's ecumenical conversations: how do you hold together genuine difference respectfully, without pretending it isn't there? How do you uphold the prayer of Jesus that his disciples be one? These are questions Anglicans have been working through with other Christian traditions in various ecumenical dialogues for decades. The NCPs have drawn from that wisdom.

The language and framing IASCUFO uses in these proposals isn't borrowed from ecumenism to soften anything or avoid tackling difficult questions. It's the most honest and tested vocabulary we have for describing how Christians can walk together in truth while still being on a journey towards fuller unity.

Questions about the proposals for broadening leadership

Q16 Why do the NCPs suggest a collegial sharing of the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury?

In many ways, this proposal builds on and formalises collegial approaches that are already happening. An increasingly collaborative and collegial pattern of ministry between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates' Meeting became normal in the last decades and was particularly developed by Archbishop Justin Welby. The Primates' Meeting of 2024 also suggested that the Archbishop of Canterbury's ministry in the Communion might be "assisted and broadened" with the help of the regional primates (who form the Primates' Standing Committee).

The regional primates also already share aspects of the Archbishop of Canterbury's pastoral ministry. For example, they represent the Communion, they support new provinces, they walk alongside churches in difficulty. The 'council' would have no more powers than the Archbishop of Canterbury already has. Even now, the archbishop does not intervene in the affairs of member churches and only provides pastoral support when such support is requested.

Q17 Does this diminish the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury?

This is about the shape of a global ministry, not about the individual who holds it. If anything, this is about freeing the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, not shrinking it. Making it more collegial doesn't reduce its significance, it makes it more sustainable and more genuinely Communion-wide.

IASCUFO were commissioned to undertake this theological work in 2023, and the NCPs were published well before the appointment of Archbishop Sarah Mullally. Work of this nature was supported by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. Archbishop Rowan Williams similarly expressed a need for broader ownership of the Instruments. The Archbishop of Canterbury has welcomed conversations about *The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals* at ACC-19.

Should the prospect of such a collegial sharing of the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury make sense, IASCUFO suggests that the archbishop and regional primates determine its structure, name, and remit.

Q18

Why do the NCPs suggest updated approaches to leadership in a global communion?

The Anglican Communion is hugely diverse and in 165+ countries. The vast majority of its millions of members live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Instruments of Communion that shape our life together should reflect this global identity.

Q19

Does a collegial sharing give primates too much power?

The proposals don't create new powers, but enable pastoral and representational dimensions of the role to be shared more widely. The Archbishop of Canterbury would remain the presumptive face of the Communion in most ecumenical settings.

Q20

How do the NCPs impact The Church of England within the Anglican Communion?

Every member church of the Anglican Communion is independent and autonomous. The Church of England is an equally valued member — no more, no less, and these proposals reflect that equality. They recognise the historic significance of The Church of England in the life of the Anglican Communion, but also celebrate the shared life of every member church around the world.