

## Presentation on *The Gift of Authority*

### PURPOSE/GOALS OF THE SESSIONS

- An introduction to the report. This is the first opportunity since publication that an instrument of the Communion will have the document presented to them.
- To provide an opportunity for members of the ACC to ask questions to clarify terminology, language, concepts contained in the document. (Not to *debate* the theological arguments or conclusions, at this stage.)
- To identify questions, resources, suggestions which may be helpful, or which need to be attended to as the provinces begin to study the text.
- To agree the timing, process and group responsible for the ongoing study of the document at the level of the Communion.

| <i>Time</i>   | <i>Format</i>  | <i>Task</i>   |
|---------------|----------------|---|
| 10.00 – 10.30 | Plenary        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose and goals of the session (David)</li> <li>• The status of the text (noting that a period of study, discussion and reflection is now required. ACC role) (David)</li> <li>• Background to the text (Tim) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authority I, II, elucidation</li> <li>- Catholic Church and Anglican Communion Responses to earlier texts</li> <li>- remaining questions identified at LC 88</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Translations and commentaries available (Tim)</li> <li>• The connections to <i>The Virginia Report, Ut unum sint</i>, CoE response to UUS, invite others (Tim)</li> <li>• The type of text it is (requires reading of the whole etc.) (+Mark)</li> <li>• The biblical/theological motif (+Mark)</li> <li>• Remarks about Universal Communion</li> <li>• Highlights: ways the report deepens agreement (+Mark).</li> </ul> |
| 10.30 – 11.00 | Small groups   | Identify questions of clarification about terminology, concepts.  |
| 11.00 – 11.30 | Coffee         |   |
| 11.30 – 11.35 | Midday Prayers |   |
| 11.35 – 12.15 | Plenary        | Each group submits/reports its questions. Panel responds to questions.  |
| 12.15 – 12.45 | Small groups   | <p>Examine the resolution, and the circulated questions. Are these the questions that we need to ask at this stage of study? Are there others?</p> <p>What resources will be helpful in the study and reception of the text.</p> <p>(These are recorded and handed in)</p>  |
| 12.45 – 1.00  | Plenary        | The resolution.   |

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## PURPOSE/GOALS OF THE SESSION

Many Christians become impatient with the ecumenical movement, believing that there are evangelical, prophetic and mission challenges before the Churches that should better occupy our time and resources. Indeed, this meeting has devoted much time to considering some of these urgent challenges: the complexities of a rapidly evolving technology; the injustice of an economic system which continues to widen gap between rich and poor. But it is useful to remember that theological dialogue on matters of faith and order may cannot easily be dismissed as irrelevant. Yet, Anglicans believe that the search for the visible unity of the Church is not merely a luxury and a distraction for theologians, but a necessity. (And the foundational documents of this Council, the ACC, remind us of our ecumenical responsibility.) The words of the 1958 Lambeth Conference express this well. "A divided Church cannot heal the wounds of a divided world." So we are engaged in ecumenical dialogue because such dialogue is an essential part of the healing of divisions, which obscure the Gospel message of reconciliation and hope.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) which was established 3 decades ago by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey, is a pioneer in terms of dialogue between separated Christian Churches, and from the start tackled issues that many thought were insurmountable obstacles. It is a body to which members are officially appointed to represent the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church world-wide. It has 8-9 members aside, plus the co-secretaries, and, very importantly, an observer from Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.

The purpose of the theological dialogue is to enable the two churches to recognise Christ in one another, and to discover how, together, the faith can be expressed, and lived. Churches which have lived in separation inevitably become divided in the way they express the faith. The method of ecumenical dialogue, followed by ARCIC, draws us back to the Scriptures and common tradition, and seeks to avoid language which has become polemical, but seeks to express the common faith in fresh ways. As we believe that we are called by God to be one, as we read in Ephesians 4.1-6

*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

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So we are now at a stage in the dialogue where we have a new text before us. On the eve of Ascension day, in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey, the agreed statement was released. It was a newsworthy event, and even caused some surprise for members of both Communions. (It is the fruit of five years of discussion, and dialogue, aiming to serve the unity which Roman Catholics and Anglicans are seeking.)

But the work does not stop when the theologians agree a text. An important phase of the work begins, a phase which must involve the whole Church, laity, clergy and those who have oversight, the bishops, in a process of receiving the text. We have heard from some places that when the text was published last May, that some were mistaken in reading the document as if it were a joint declaration of the two Church authorities! It is not. It is a statement of theologians, officially appointed by the churches, and with an official mandate, but their work is now handed back to the Church at large for consideration.

So, The results of theological dialogue are now before us, and we now begin a process of reception. A process which hopefully will involve us all, studying and evaluating the text.

The significant breakthroughs of the early years of the work of ARCIC, particularly on eucharist and ministry, have meant that we now are much closer to the goal of full visible unity than ever before in our separated history. The next steps of the dialogue require patience and great care. It is a process which cannot be rushed, and there will be a number of moments over the next several years to check and see how the process is going. But, in a real sense, the Anglican Communion begins this process today.

And I stress the word "begins." Not to decide yes or no, but to

So the purposes of this morning's sessions, just to be very clear are:

- Purposes
- To introduce the report, put it in context, and highlight its content. This is the first opportunity since publication that an instrument of the Communion will have the document presented to them.
  - To provide an opportunity for members of the ACC to ask questions to clarify terminology, language, concepts contained in the document. Since we are beginning a process, it is not for us today to *debate* the theological arguments or conclusions, at this stage. There will be time, in the churches over the next few

lead off a process that will help the Comm. express its response.

years to do that, and hopefully to do it sensitively and patiently. But today we have an opportunity to ask some questions that may help us to understand the language used, and the concepts that are contained in the document.

- To identify questions, resources, suggestions which may be helpful, or which need to be attended to as the provinces begin to study the text. But it will be very useful if, by the end of this morning's session, we have gathered some of your suggestions about the questions which will be useful as provinces, dioceses and parishes study the text, as well as any particular resources which the Communion might well prepare to enable this.
- To agree the timing, process and group responsible for the ongoing study of the document at the level of the Communion. The Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations will take a lead role in managing the study and reception of the statement throughout the Communion, as is noted in the report of the Ecumenical director which is in your preparatory papers. But it is good to establish some time-frame, so that the churches can pace themselves, and give adequate time for its consideration.

As we begin then, this study, let us remember that our commitment to ecumenism must be based upon the conversion of hearts and upon prayer, which will also lead to the necessary purification of past memories. Pope John Paul has stated some wise words in his ecumenical encyclical *Ut unum sint*, "What is needed is a calm, clear sighted and truthful vision of things. There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart." (*UUS*, paras 2,15)

Some Anglican liberal and evangelical reactions mis-read the proportions of the document, paying little attention to the sections on scripture and local church. It is true that many went straight to the bits that they were interested in, rather than to read the whole document. There is valuable work on Scripture and Tradition, things that are crucial for the Anglican Communion itself.