

# ARCIC document 'vision of future reality'

## Church should consider 'nuances'

DAVID HARRIS

The senior Anglican of an international ecumenical group with Roman Catholics is urging critics to get beyond emotions and look at the "nuances" of a recent document suggesting the pope should be the head of both churches.

Bishop Frank Griswold, who co-chairs the group with Roman Catholic bishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, said a recent publication by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission promoting the idea of the pope as the chief bishop of the two churches is not meant to be the final word in a discussion. Rather, he said, it is "a vision of a future reality rather than dealing with complications present now" in the churches. "It's leaven in the dough."

The Gift of Authority was jointly published in the spring by the two denominations and has caused considerable reaction, especially in the Anglican world. But evangelical Anglicans have been joined by liberal Roman Catholics in condemning the statement that calls the pope's authority – known as universal primacy – a "gift to be shared."

In an interview after ARCIC's recent meeting held outside Toronto, Bishop Griswold acknowl-



Members of ARCIC, staff and local ecumenical guests attended dinner at the York Club in Toronto at the invitation of the Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses. The commission met in Mississauga in late August.

edged much of the initial reaction to Gift of Authority has been negative. But he said some of that was "emotional." He challenged the churches to look at the "quite significant ... nuances" in the text. He said Anglicans have to consider what kind of papal authority they might accept and Roman Catholics have to consider what role lay people might have in governing the church in synods.

Bishop Griswold also admitted most of the nuances concern what the Roman Catholic Church might consider re-establishing in its life and governance but he said that

was because the role and authority of the pope has been a clear issue in ecumenical talks for a long time.

"Early on, ARCIC identified universal primacy as a stumbling block," he said.

But Bishop Griswold said the role of the bishop in synod, which is the centre of Anglican authority, will be important for Roman Catholics to consider in light of a similar emphasis in their church at Vatican II. "How the mind of Christ is discerned is not merely through episcopal teaching," he said, but "the whole church, including the laity" is involved.

Bishop Griswold also said some people are interpreting authority too narrowly. "Authority is not seen as a power so much as God's desire to bring the world to flourishing," he said. It is a "life-giving" word at the heart of "evangelization, mission and healing" that gives freedom, he said.

For Anglicans, he said that means the church has to consider what the agents of authority are. Still experiencing fallout from last year's Lambeth Conference where a narrower traditionalist interpretation of Scripture won out over a broader liberal view, Bishop

Griswold said Scripture is authoritative, "but what does that mean?" He said ARCIC was careful to note that both Word and Spirit are needed in the life of a community of faith.

Bishop Griswold is chief bishop of the Anglican Church in the U.S. It was his first time co-chairing the delegates who met from Aug. 26 to Sept. 2 in Mississauga, the first meeting of the group in Canada. Next year they meet in Paris.

The 18 delegates, plus official observers, discussed initial reactions to the Gift of Authority and considered whether to do some work on different understandings of the Virgin Mary in their respective churches.

Bishop Griswold said the "ecumenical questions of the Virgin Mary are still on the table" and ARCIC is not committed to producing a treatise.

The group also discussed next year's meeting of 13 Anglican primates and 13 senior Roman Catholic bishops in Mississauga. "ARCIC is going to listen very carefully" at that meeting, Bishop Griswold said, indicating he is one of the primates who will be present at the event that will be closed to the public.

But he said the meeting is important because "out of the affection" that rises in the relationships forged among participants are "profound experiences of Incarnation."

"Documents aren't enough," he said, adding a "direct pastoral encounter" often accomplishes more.