

The Virginia Report



The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission

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PREFACE

This Report is the work of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission which comprises theologians and church leaders who themselves represent the diversities of the Anglican Communion. Their task was to respond to the call of the Lambeth Conference of 1988 to consider in some depth the meaning and nature of communion. This response was to be set within the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church and the unity and community of humanity. At the heart and center of the Anglican pilgrimage lies the concept of communion. From it we derive so much of our belief and practice. It is not itself a static concept. It has become with out pilgrimage a living and developing reality. Yet that fact alone demands understanding which cannot be tied to any one period of our history or to any single cultural approach. This Report is offered to the Anglican Communion as one more step in the process of seeking greater understanding of what communion means to the Body of Christ. In particular it seeks to suggest ways in which our Communion can respond in practical ways which touch and concern how we order our corporate life and lives as individuals. I wish to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the generosity and support given to the Commission by the Right Reverend Peter Lee, Bishop of Virginia, the Diocese of Virginia and the staff of the Virginia Theological Seminary. Their practical assistance and encouragement made the production of this Report possible. It has been a great privilege to chair the Commission and I acknowledge the support and work of all its members.

+ Robert Eames
Archbishop of Armagh

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INTRODUCTION

Origin and Mandate of the Commission

In 1988 the Lambeth Conference was faced with a question that challenged the unity of the Communion: the proposal by the Episcopal Church of the United States of America to consecrate a woman to the episcopate. In the light of its deliberations the Lambeth Conference passed resolution 1 on the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate. In response to this resolution of the Conference the Archbishop of Canterbury, in consultation with the Primates, established a Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate under the leadership of the Most Revd Robert Eames, Archbishop of Armagh

(a) to provide for an examination of the relationships between Provinces of the Anglican Communion and ensure that the process of reception includes continuing consultation with other Churches as well;

(b) to monitor and encourage the process of consultation within the Communion and to offer further pastoral guidelines (The Truth Shall Make You Free, The Lambeth Conference 1988. Resolution 1, page 201).

The Eames Commission, as it came to be known, met five times and produced four reports which were published together in December 1994. Its last meeting was in December 1993 and its report will be presented to the 1998 Lambeth Conference. During its lifetime the Commission engaged in theological reflection on the nature of koinonia. It offered guidelines on how Anglicans might live together in the highest degree of communion possible while different views and practices concerning the ordination of women continued to be held within the Communion. The Eames Commission saw this as a way of enabling an ongoing process of reception both within the Anglican Communion and the wider ecumenical fellowship. Its guidelines are intended to support graceful and charitable relationships and to ensure proper pastoral care for one another. Before its last meeting, five women had been consecrated as bishops. Also in that period the ordination of women to the priesthood had received the necessary consents in the Church of England and over 1000 women were ordained as priests, and by then women had also been ordained as priests in Australia, Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Hong Kong and Macao, Ireland, Kenya, the Philippines, Scotland, Southern Africa, Uganda, the USA and West Africa.

The Eames Commission between 1988 and 1993 provided a model of how Anglicans can remain together in the highest degree of communion possible while endeavoring to come to a common mind on a matter which touches the fundamental unity of the Communion. The 1988 Conference recognized that there was a need to describe how the Anglican Communion makes authoritative decisions while maintaining unity and interdependence in the light of the many theological issues that arise from its diversity. To address this need, the Conference resolved that there should be:

As a matter of urgency further exploration of the meaning and nature of communion with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church, and the unity and community of humanity (Lambeth Conference 1988, Resolution 18, page 216. See Appendix I).

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Resolution 8 on the Final Report of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission also had a direct bearing on the exercise of authority in the Church. It encouraged ARCIC to explore the basis in Scripture and Tradition of the concept of a universal primacy, in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity, the character of such primacy in practice, and to draw upon the experience of other Christian Churches in exercising primacy, collegiality and conciliarity.

In implementing Resolution 18 of Lambeth 1988, and at the request of the Primates of the Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury invited a group of representative church leaders and theologians to meet in December 1991 at the Virginia Theological Seminary at Alexandria, USA to begin the exploration. The Consultation's report was called *Belonging Together*. The Report was circulated widely within the Communion between 1992 and 1994 with a request for critical comment. A number of Anglican member churches responded officially. There were also responses from theological institutions and individuals.

All the responses were considered by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, the successor of the 1991 Consultation, when it met in December 1994, and again in January 1996, on both occasions at the Virginia Theological Seminary. This report is the product of its consideration and further reflection on the issues.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONTEXT

1.1 Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed that his followers might be one, as He and the Father are one, so that the world might believe (Jn 17:20-21). Christians of every tradition struggle to respond in faith, life and witness, to the vision of unity expressed in the prayer of Jesus. At every level of Christian life, the call to graceful interdependence and unity in faith and doctrine challenge us.

1.2 From the earliest time in the history of the Christian community, an admonishing voice has been heard exhorting believers to maintain agreement with one another and thereby to avert divisions. From an almost equally early date they have found consensus, even on apparently major matters, singularly difficult to achieve. When the second century Churches evolved a collection of early Christian documents which came to be called the New Testament, they had a few documents which did not attest and reflect deep disagreements, and the formation of the collection itself was the product of controversies. Nevertheless the controversies themselves were stages on a road towards greater consensus.

1.3 What makes unity and interdependence particularly difficult today? In the last 200 years the world has seen extraordinary development in the political, scientific, economic and psychological spheres. These developments have brought many blessings to the peoples of the world. At the same time there has been the disintegration of traditional cultures, values and social structures and unprecedented threats to the environment. The tension between blessing and disintegration creates a challenge to the unity and interdependence that the peoples of the world face.

1.4 The authority of nineteenth and twentieth century notions of progress, economic growth and the free market economy, the omnipotence of scientific method and technology, and competitive individualism is no longer accepted without question. In many places there is a search for cultural, personal and social identity which honours the integrity and value of cultural roots.

1.5 Within this context, Anglicans strive to be faithful to the Gospel in their particular cultural contexts, and to face moral, doctrinal, social and economic exigencies which demand discernment and response if identity as the Christian community is to be maintained. For example, issues of justice and human rights including human sexuality, the family and the status of women, racial equality, religious freedom and the use and distribution of resources demand attention. Our response to these issues is conditioned by our particular cultural context, our way of interpreting the Bible, our degree of awareness of being part of a wider human community, and our attentiveness to the response of other ecumenical partners and to the concerns of those of other faiths.

1.6 The churches of the Anglican Communion struggle with these concerns within a life of communion and interdependence. Discernment has to be exercised about which concerns are best addressed by the local church, which provincially and which by the whole Communion. An added burden is placed on decision making when churches are separated from one another.

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1.7 New challenges to unity press impatiently upon all churches, not least those of the Anglican Communion. Today we might cite divisive issues in, for example, the Indian Ocean and Europe, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Nigeria and the Middle East, the United States, Australia and South East Asia.

1.8 When Christians find themselves passionately engaged in the midst of complex and explosive situations, how do they avoid alienation from those who by baptism are their brothers and sisters in Christ, who are embraced in the communion of God the Holy Trinity, but who disagree? How do they stay in communion with God and each other; how do they behave towards each other in the face of disagreement and conflict? What are the limits of diversity if the Gospel imperative of unity and communion are to be maintained?

1.9 In addressing issues raised by the complexities of contemporary life, solutions will in some cases be necessarily provisional. There are times when the path ahead is insufficiently clear for categorical claims to be made. Forming a mind entails learning from those within the Anglican Communion and being in partnership and dialogue with ecumenical and interfaith colleagues. There is merit in the Anglican approach of listening to others, of holding each other in the highest degree of communion possible with tolerance for deeply held differences of conviction and practice.

1.10 While we are aware of significant challenges to our unity as a Communion we recognise that we have received the gracious gift of God the Holy Trinity, the resources of our life in Christ in word and sacrament and the determination to develop appropriate and more effective structures for maintaining unity in service and mission.

1.11 The Commission has centered its study on the understanding of Trinitarian faith. It believes that the unity of the Anglican Communion derives from the unity given in the triune God, whose inner personal and relational nature is communion. This is our center. This mystery of God's life calls us to communion in visible form. This is why the Church is called again and again to review and to reform the structures of its life together so that they nurture and enable the life of communion in God and serve God's mission in the world.

1.12 The references in the Lambeth resolution to the Trinitarian doctrine and the unity and community of the whole human family make it clear that the concern of the Lambeth Conference was not simply for strengthening the peace and unity of the Anglican Communion, but also for the faithful and effective engagement of the Communion in God's mission of love and reconciliation in the world.

1.13 The mission and ministry of reconciliation entrusted by God to the Church are given in baptism to the whole people of God, the laos. While this report necessarily dwells on the structures of ministry in the processes of oversight, their interdependence and accountability, it does so in the conviction and hope that this reflection will open up the possibility of creative change which will strengthen the ministry and mission of the whole people of God.

1.14 The instruments of communion which are a gift of God to the Church help to hold us in the life of the triune God. These are the instruments which we seek to renew within the Anglican Communion. They are also the structures we seek to share with all those who have been baptised into the life of the Triune God. Our hope is that this theological reflection may contribute not only to the Anglican Communion but to the ecumenical goal of full visible unity.

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1.15 In reflecting on the structures of Anglican unity and authority, we are aware that discernment, decision making and teaching with authority are today, sadly, in the context of separated Churches, and are therefore only partial reflections of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. This requires Anglicans to listen to the experience of other ecclesial communities and to continue to deepen the work of ecumenical dialogue on the nature of authority and its exercise in the Church and to renew our Anglican structures in line with the emerging ecumenical convergence.

1.16 Having referred in this chapter to the context and the challenges that face Christians today, the report goes on in chapter two, to a theological reflection on the gracious gift of love in the triune God and how the Church responds to that gift in the ministry that the Church has received from Christ. Chapter three examines the bonds of interdependence: what holds Anglicans together. Chapter four explores the principle of subsidiarity, identifying the ways in which the bonds of unity are appropriately expressed at the different levels the Church's life. Chapter five identifies the principles which undergird our life together and chapter six offers some observations about how Anglican international institutions of unity might be strengthened and improved in order to strengthen our life together for the sake of God's mission in the world.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGY OF GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFT: THE COMMUNION OF THE TRINITY AND THE CHURCH

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I. The Understanding of Gracious Gift

2.1 God's gracious gift of steadfast loving kindness was from the beginning known by the people of God in the form of covenant. From the prophets came the conviction that God's faithfulness was never ending even when God's people were forgetful and betrayed the divine trust.

2.2 God's love and faithfulness was understood as having been an act of creation. God's promise to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature on the earth (Gen 9:17) was a promise which was renewed again and again through the ages.

2.3 God's word to Moses in Exodus 3:14 expresses the divine promise which forever grounds the hope of inter-relational communion between God and the people of God in an everlasting and personal relationship even in the midst of tragedy.

2.4 The people of God interpreted the memory of the Sinai Covenant in words remembered as spoken by Moses, words which would forever define God's sacred relationship with his chosen people:

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you - for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors. (Deut. 7:6-8a).

2.5 God's chosen, the people of Israel, would tell the story of God's never failing love in intimate longing and passion. So the prophet is moved to proclaim:

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you (Is. 62:4-5).

And in the midst of despair and anguish Jeremiah speaks of God's loving act of restoration:

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:33).

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2.6 Jesus spoke of this God of steadfast loving kindness and faithfulness as his Father. He prayed: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:25-27).

2.7 The good news of the Christian Gospel is that Jesus' life among us is God's life - God breaking down the barriers of our bondage and sinfulness. In Jesus, God is with us in all our human helplessness; with us in our life and in our death. In Jesus, God is faithful to us even on a cross. In the risen Jesus, God is with us to transfigure and set free all those who are bound by fear and sin. Jesus is God with us, and to know Jesus is to be with God. God has shared our human world with us, and through the great events of cross and resurrection we are empowered and invited to share God's life, to share God's glory and freedom, to proclaim God's holiness and mercy in word and act. We know God as we live with Jesus: so that we can and must say that Jesus' life is the act and expression of God (The Lambeth Conference 1988, page 82).

2.8 The climax of the Son's revelation of the Father occurs in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. On the night before he died, Jesus revealed that the communion of love he shared with the Father would be shared by the community of his disciples. John's Gospel remembers the intimate moment of God's gracious gift of love.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another (John 15, 9, 13, 15-17).

2.9 The love with which the Father loves Jesus is the love with which Jesus loves us. On the night before he died Jesus prayed (Jn. 17) that all who follow him should be drawn into that love and unity which exists between the Father and the Son. Thus our unity with one another is grounded in the life of love, unity and communion of the Godhead. The eternal, mutual self-giving and receiving love of the three persons of the Trinity is the source and ground of our communion, of our fellowship with God and one another. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are drawn into a divine fellowship of love and unity. Further, it is because the Holy Trinity is a unique unity of purpose, and at the same time a diversity of ways of being and function, that the Church is called to express diversity in its own life, a diversity held together in God's unity and love (The Lambeth Conference 1988, page 130).

2.10 At the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus promised the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. He prayed that God would come to the community as the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would bear witness to the truth of all that Jesus said and did.

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides in you, and he will be in you .
Jesus goes on,

On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them (John 14:16-17; 20-21).

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2.11 The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost created the Church, the community of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit lifted up the community into the very life of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowered the community to pray "Abba, Father" as free, adopted, children of God (Romans 8:15-17, Gal. 4:4-7). "Clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), the community is empowered to go forth to proclaim the Good News of God to all peoples and nations. The Holy Spirit is the unifying force of God in the community. The unity of the Church which is given, and yet which it seeks to deepen, is grounded in the very unity of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:3-14, 4:1-6).

2.12 Every act of God is an act of the undivided Holy Trinity. The very being of the Church is thus dependent upon the outpouring of God's gracious love, the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The experience of the truth of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ came to the disciples as a gracious gift. What the disciples experienced at Pentecost in Jesus Christ was that communion of life with God which was present at creation and which will be perfected in the fullness of time.

II. The Communion of the Trinity and the Life of the Church

2.13 By the power of the Holy Spirit the Church is born into history as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). The Church is called the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16), a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God claims as his own (1 Pet. 2:9). These images of the Church speak of a communion with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Christians are participants in the divine nature. This communion also determines our relationship with one another. "We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Communion with God and one another is both gift and divine expectation for the Church (Eames I, *Koinonia and the Mystery of God*, 21-22).

2.14 Because the Church as communion participates in God's communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it has an eschatological reality and significance. The Church is the advent, in history, of God's final will being done "on earth as it is in heaven." That will was revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and is continually inspired by the work of the Spirit in the life and mission of the Church. The Church is the icon of the future toward which God is directing the history of the world. A faithful church signifies by its life that it is the living promise of God's purpose in the midst of today's history. The Church lives in the present, remembering again and again (making anamnesis) the Christ event and receiving in hope the promise of the Kingdom. In this way, the saving events of Christ's death and resurrection and the foretaste of the Kingdom are brought into the present experience of the Church.

2.15 The Church looks forward in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to that day when God's name will be made holy, God's Kingdom come, when God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. The seventh century theologian St. Maximus the Confessor put it this way: "The things of the past are shadow; those of the present icon; the truth is to be found in the things of the future" (Scolion on the ecclesiastical hierarchy, 3,3:2). Faithful Christian community with God the Holy Trinity, is focused in a vision of the final and ultimate reign of God. Its mission is to be the living and visible sign of that divine reign, when He will dwell with them as their God; "they will be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more; for the first things have passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).

III. The Communion of the Trinity and Mission and Ministry

2.16 A living faith in the God of Jesus Christ draws us into the life of the Holy Trinity. This means living as Jesus lived his life, empowered by God's Spirit:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19).

2.17 The same Spirit of the Lord rests upon the Church and dwells in the hearts of the believers, empowering the community to go forth as Christ did to proclaim the reign of God. The mission of the Church is to be the icon of God's life. By prayer and praise, mercy and peace, justice and love, constantly welcoming the sinner, the outcast, the marginalised into her sanctuary, the Church is revealed as communion and is faithful to its mission. As Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:16), God's own people (1 Pet. 2:9) the Church lives in mutual love and is sent forth as a missionary community to gather all of creation into God's reconciling love, restore and renew it in the life of the triune God (Rom. 8:19-25).

2.18 The mission of Christ and the Church is celebrated and proclaimed in the liturgy, which shapes the trinitarian faith of the people of God and empowers them for a life of ministry and mission. This is especially true of holy baptism and holy eucharist.

2.19 As the sacrament of initiation into the life of the Church, baptism is related not only to a single experience, but to lifelong growth in Christ and participation in his ministry. Those who are baptized are called upon to reflect the glory of the Lord with ever increasing splendour as they are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into his likeness. As they grow in the Christian life of faith, baptized believers demonstrate that humanity can be regenerated and liberated. They have a common responsibility to bear witness in the Church and the world to the Gospel of Christ, "the Liberator of all human beings." (BEM, Baptism 9, 10).

2.20 The eucharist also embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among those who are brothers and sisters in the one family of God, and constantly challenges those who participate to search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life (Matt 5:23f. I Cor 10:16f; 11:20-22. Gal 3:28). All injustice, racism, separation and denial of freedom are radically challenged when Christians share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the eucharist the grace of God penetrates, restores and renews human personality and dignity. The eucharist involves believers in the central event of the world's history, the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, and sends them into the world in peace to love and serve the Lord (BEM, Eucharist 20).

2.21 Jesus Christ manifests and carries out for us God's creative, reconciling and perfecting mission and ministry to the world. All Christian ministry is rooted in that unique ministry of Jesus Christ. The centre of Jesus's ministry is his self-offering on the cross for the reconciliation of God and humanity and the healing of the whole human family (Colossians 1:19; 2 Cor. 5:19). Christ's passion, death and resurrection brings into relationship those who had become alienated, both individually and corporately. The reconciling work of Christ, the very heart of the Christian good news, brings those who receive him into the trinitarian life of sharing and interrelationship.

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2.22 Christ calls human beings to share in that loving and redeeming work of God and empowers them for that ministry with his Spirit. Jesus prayed, "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Christ called and equipped his disciples and sent them to reflect his own ministry of healing, teaching, leading, feeding and proclaiming. Through the varied aspects of the Church's one ministry, the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed is brought into historical expression.

2.23 To be baptized and to participate at the Table of the Lord is to be entrusted with Christ's one, continuing mission through the Church. The baptised are called to unity and interdependence. United to Christ, each member of the Body relates to the other members; they are interdependent with and through Christ. To celebrate the eucharist together reveals and builds this mutuality. "We who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread". In eucharist the Spirit affirms and renews communion in Christ and the gifts given us to participate in the divine mission.

2.24 The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complimentary gifts. (cf. BEM, Ministry 5) God the Creator, blesses people with many talents and abilities. The Holy Spirit graces individuals with special gifts. The outworking of one person's gift in the Church is unthinkable apart from all the others. The mutuality and interdependence of each member and each part of the Church is essential for the fulfillment of the Church's mission. In the early Church, those who spoke in tongues needed interpreters of tongues; Paul's mission to the Gentiles complemented Peter's mission to the Jews. The ministry of serving tables in the early Church freed the other disciples to preach God's word. The gifts of all contribute to the building up of the community and the fulfillment of its calling.

2.25 But the one mission of the Church, the Body of Christ, must always find its motivation, its intelligibility and its integrity in the one ministry of the Church's Lord, Jesus Christ. The variety and difference among Christian charisma would quickly become incoherent and disabling if it were to become eccentric, without a reference to its centre in Christ. An important function of life in communion is always to remain attentive to one another, particularly when conflict arises, so that the centre may never be forgotten. Seen in the framework of God's mission of love in Christ and the Spirit, the variety of gifts, which may appear to be potentially divisive, is seen to be necessary, mutually enriching, and a cause for thanks and praise to God.

2.26 God invites his people to enjoy diversity. As Christ's body, the Church must affirm that variety of gifts and use them faithfully both for the building up of the body "until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity to the measure of the full stature of Christ" and "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12-13).

CHAPTER 3
BELONGING TOGETHER IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

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3.1 Anglicans are held together in a life of visible communion. Baptism is God's gift of unity, the means by which an individual participates in the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and is brought into a living community of faith. The confession of a common faith, the celebration of the eucharist, a life of common prayer, the service of an ordered ministry, conciliar structures, shared service and mission sustain a life of Anglican belonging. These elements belong to the universal Church and are not unique to Anglicans. They are nevertheless, lived out in a recognisable and characteristically Anglican way.

3.2 In the sixteenth century, members of the Church of England continued to understand themselves as the local embodiment of the Catholic Church, continuing to live in England with the same faith, sacraments and ministry of the Church through the ages, and yet they developed a family likeness which today characterises Anglicans who live not only in England but in the 36 provinces of the Anglican Communion.

3.3 One feature of Anglican life is the way it holds together diversities of many kinds. From the Reformation Anglicans endeavoured to hold together people of different temperaments, convictions and insights: the puritans who wanted more radical reform and the conservatives who emphasized their continuity with the pre-reformation Church. Today, for example, evangelicals, catholics, liberals and charismatics bring a diversity of insights and perspectives as Anglicans struggle to respond to the contemporary challenges to faith, order and moral teaching. Bound up with these groupings are the differences which arise from a variety of reactions to critical study of the Bible, particular cultural contexts, different schools of philosophical thought and scientific theory. The Reformation insistence on providing the Scriptures in the vernacular opened the possibility that the faith is expressed in the language, symbols and imagery of the different cultural contexts.

3.4 At best the Anglican way is characterised by generosity and tolerance to those of different views. It also entails a willingness to contain difference and live with tension, even conflict, as the Church seeks a common mind on controversial issues. The comprehensiveness that marks the Anglican Communion is not a sign of weakness or uncertainty about the central truths of the faith. Neither does it mean that Anglicans accept that there are no limits to diversity.

I. The Anglican Way: Scripture, Tradition and Reason

3.5 Anglicans are held together by the characteristic way in which they use Scripture, tradition and reason in discerning afresh the mind of Christ for the Church in each generation. This was well described in the Report of the Pastoral and Dogmatic Concerns section of Lambeth 1988.

3.6 Anglicans affirm the sovereign authority of the Holy Scriptures as the medium through which God by the Spirit communicates his word in the Church and thus enables people to respond with understanding and faith. The Scriptures are "uniquely inspired witness to divine revelation", and "the primary norm for Christian faith and life".

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3.7 The Scriptures, however, must be translated, read, and understood, and their meaning grasped through a continuing process of interpretation. Since the seventeenth century Anglicans have held that Scripture is to be understood and read in the light afforded by the contexts of "tradition" and "reason".

3.8 In one sense tradition denotes the Scriptures themselves, in that they embody "the tradition", "the message", "the faith once delivered to the saints". Tradition refers to the ongoing Spirit-guided life of the Church which receives, and in receiving interprets afresh God's abiding message. The living tradition embraces the ecumenical creeds, the classical eucharistic prayers, which belong with the Scriptures as forming their essential message. Tradition is not to be understood as an accumulation of formulae and texts but the living mind, the nerve centre of the Church. Anglican appeal to tradition is the appeal to this mind of the Church carried by the worship, teaching and the Spirit-filled life of the Church.

3.9 Properly speaking "reason" means simply the human being's capacity to symbolise, and so to order, share and communicate experience. It is the divine gift in virtue of which human persons respond and act with awareness in relation to their world and to God, and are opened up to that which is true for every time and every place. Reason cannot be divorced either from Scripture or tradition, since neither is conceivable apart from the working of reason. In another perspective, reason means not so much the capacity to make sense of things as it does "that which makes sense", or "that which is reasonable". The appeal to reason then becomes what people - and that means people in a given time and place - take as good sense or "common" sense. It refers to what can be called "the mind of a particular culture", with its characteristic ways of seeing things, asking about them, and explaining them. If tradition is the mind that Christians share as believers and members of the Church, reason is the mind they share as participants in a particular culture.

3.10 Anglicanism sees reason in the sense of the "mind" of the culture in which the Church lives and the Gospel is proclaimed, as a legitimate and necessary instrument for the interpretation of God's message in the Scriptures. Sometimes Scriptures affirm the new insights of a particular age or culture, sometimes they challenge or contradict those insights. The Word of God is addressed to the Church as it is part of the world. The Gospel borne by the Scriptures must be heard and interpreted in the language that bears the "mind" and distils the experience of the world. Tradition and reason are therefore in the Anglican way two distinct contexts in which Scriptures speak and out of which they are interpreted.

3.11 The characteristic Anglican way of living with a constant dynamic interplay of Scripture, tradition and reason means that the mind of God has constantly to be discerned afresh, not only in every age, but in each and every context. Moreover, the experience of the Church as it is lived in different places has something to contribute to the discernment of the mind of Christ for the Church. No one culture, no one period of history has a monopoly of insight into the truth of the Gospel. It is essential for the fullest apprehension of truth that context is in dialogue with context. Sometimes the lived experience of a particular community enables Christian truth to be perceived afresh for the whole community. At other times a desire for change or restatement of the faith in one place provokes a crisis within the whole Church. In order to keep the Anglican Communion living as a dynamic community of faith, exploring and making relevant the understanding of the faith, structures for taking counsel and deciding are an essential part of the life of the Communion

II. The Anglican Way: Sacrament and Worship

3.12 Fundamental to the Anglican way of living with and responding to diversity is the constant interplay and influence of Scripture, tradition and reason. The Scriptures are read and interpreted in the round of common daily prayer and in the celebration of the sacraments. In worship the faith is encountered in the hearing of the word and in the experience of the sacraments. In the sacrament of baptism Christians die and rise again with Christ through the waters of baptism to new life in him. In the eucharist they encounter the central mysteries of the faith in the anamnesis, the making present of those past events and the experience of future glory, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Word and sacrament are fundamental to the life of the Anglican Communion as it seeks to teach the faith and to give guidance for the right conduct in human life, expressing this in doctrine and moral guidance. A family likeness in common prayer expressed in many languages is a precious heritage which is significant in forming Anglican identity and maintaining unity. A commitment to daily prayer, to systematic scripture reading, to praying the psalms and canticles, to regular credal confession of the faith, and to intercessory prayer for one another and for the needs of the world is an integral part of Anglican belonging.

3.13 All of these resources keep Anglicans living together in fidelity to the memory and hope of Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. In the present they are bound together as they remember the past and anticipate the reconciliation of all things in Christ at the end of time.

III. Interdependence of Charisms in the Life of the Church

3.14 All who are baptised into the life of God and live out their calling as members of the Anglican Communion are given a charism of the Holy Spirit for the life of the Communion and for the service of others. The vocation of the laos is exercised in a broad context of social and communal life in civil society, at work and in recreation and within the family, as well as within the life of the community of the Church. By virtue of their baptism all members are called to confess their faith and to give account of their hope in what they do and what they say.

3.15 The calling of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given to them, to carry out Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship and governance of the Church.

3.16 To enable the community of faith to respond to Christ's call God has given to the Church the charism of ordered ministry: the episcopate, the presbyterate, and the diaconate. The ordained ministry is exercised with, in and among the whole people of God.

3.17 The calling of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, teacher and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.

3.18 The calling of a priest or presbyter is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishops in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

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3.19 The calling of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant to those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments (ECUSA, BCP, page 855-856).

3.20 The complementary gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on the community are for the common good and for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world to which the Church is sent

IV. The Ministry of Oversight

3.21 The continuation of a ministry of oversight (episkope) at the Reformation exercised by bishops, by bishops in college and by bishops in council is what is referred to in the current ecumenical writing as "the personal, collegial and communal" ways of exercising the ministry of oversight. These forms of ministry help to hold Anglicans together in a community of discernment and reflection.

3.22 Every diocese in the Anglican Communion knows something of the exercise of the personal ministry of oversight of the bishop (or bishops); of collegiality in the coming together of bishops and clergy; and of the communal dimension of oversight which brings together the bishop with clergy and laity in the meeting of synods. These dimensions of the ministry of oversight are expressed in different ways in the different regions of the world and are affected by local circumstance and custom.

3.23 The bishop presides over the gatherings, collegial and communal in the diocese. Sometimes the bishop shares the presiding over meetings with a member of the laity. In most places at the level of a Province, the collegial and synodical gatherings are presided over by an archbishop or presiding bishop. Collegiality and primacy are thus part of the Anglican experience at diocesan, Provincial and Communion-wide levels. Within the Communion, Provincial primacy, influenced by the different cultural contexts, varies in perception and practice.

V. Structures of Interdependence

3.24 The life of belonging together with its characteristic ethos within the Anglican Communion is supported by a web of structures which hold together and guide a common life of belonging. These structures owe something to their continuity with the western catholic Church and also to the Reformation of the sixteenth century. They have undergone considerable development since the sixteenth century and continue to be subject to change and development today.

3.25 At the Reformation the Church of England maintained the threefold order of ministry in continuity with the early Church. Bishops in their dioceses continued to be the personal focus of the continuity and unity of the Church. There was no attempt to minimise the role of bishops as ministers of word and sacrament nor to stop a collegial relation between bishops and presbyters in the diocese or bishops together at the level of Province. Conciliar life continued to be part of the Church of England's experience. The role of Parliament and the Royal Supremacy ensured that the role and place of the laity were embedded in the structuring of the life of the Church of England. In time, this developed into synodical structures which bring together ordained and lay for discernment, decision making and authoritative teaching.

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3.26 The expansion of the Church of England as a result of British colonisation led to the formation of Provinces, each with its own episcopal and synodical structures for maintaining the life of the Church. In the post-colonial period of the twentieth century the various independent Anglican Churches are governed by synods which recognise bishops' authority in some form as crucial and distinct, but which include, not only presbyterial representation, but also lay representation. Each Province, too, has developed some form of primatial office in the role of archbishop or presiding bishop .

3.27 The expression of episcopacy and the form of synodical and collegial government are not identical in each place. The experience and exercise of authority in the local context has played a part in shaping the different Provincial structures and processes. In some places the increasing emphasis on democratic forms of representation in modern secular governments has also affected church government.

3.28 In the development of the Anglican Communion there is no legislative authority above the Provincial level. (How far this is a result of the Royal Supremacy in the Church of England is a matter for reflection. Other historical factors in other Provinces have also affected the question of autonomy and interdependence.) There has been an insistence upon the autonomy of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. However, while autonomy entails the legal and juridical right of each Province to govern its way of life, in practice autonomy has never been the sole criterion for understanding the relation of Provinces to one another. There has generally been an implicit understanding of belonging together and interdependence. The life of the Communion is held together in the creative tension of Provincial autonomy and interdependence. There are some signs that the Provinces are coming to a greater realisation that they need each other's spiritual, intellectual and material resources in order to fulfill their task of mission. Each Province has something distinctive to offer the others, and needs them in turn to be able to witness to Christ effectively in its own context. Questions are asked about whether we can go on as a world Communion with morally authoritative, but not juridically binding, decision-making structures at the international level. A further question is the relationship between the autonomy of a Province and the theological importance of a diocese which is reckoned to be the basic unit of Anglicanism.

3.29 The interdependence of the Provinces has come to be maintained by certain ministries, structures and relationships which continue to develop. The first of these is the Archbishop of Canterbury.

3.30 While the request for first Lambeth Conference in 1867 came from the Communion and not from Canterbury, it assembled at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who also presided over it. The continuing role of Canterbury, as a focus of the unity of the Anglican Communion and the "first among equals" in the Anglican college of bishops, came to clear expression in this way. The primacy of Canterbury and the international collegiality and conciliarity of Anglicanism are inextricably interrelated.

3.31 The primacy of the See of Canterbury and its key role in the Communion clearly emerged in many of the resolutions of the first Lambeth Conference. However, at the Conference of 1897 the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in gathering the Communion was explicitly acknowledged and affirmed when he was urged to foster the maintenance and development of the Communion by calling the Conference of bishops every ten years.

3.32 Today Anglican identity and authenticity of belonging is generally determined by the outward and visible test of communion with the See of Canterbury. The 1930 Lambeth Conference explicitly defined Anglicanism in this way:

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"It is part of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Its centre of unity is the See of Canterbury. To be Anglican it is necessary to be in communion with that See".

Resolution 49 added further:

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, with One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church...in communion with the See of Canterbury... (Lambeth Conference 1930, Resolution 49).

3.33 Lambeth 1968 described the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury in more detail:

Within the college of bishops it is evident that there must be a president. In the Anglican Communion this position is at present held by the occupant of the historic See of Canterbury, who enjoys a primacy of honour, not of jurisdiction. This primacy is found to involve, in a particular way, that care of all the churches which is shared by all the bishops.

3.34 The Lambeth Conference of 1978 in a further statement on the basis of Anglican unity said *inter alia*:

"Its [unity] is personally grounded in the loyal relationship of each of the churches to the Archbishop of Canterbury who is freely recognised as the focus of unity."

3.35 Being in communion with the See and Archbishop of Canterbury has been a visible sign of the membership of bishops and of their Churches in the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury's task has been described as involving "in a particular way, that care of all the churches which is shared by all the bishops", and also as a task "not to command but to gather" the Communion. Clearly, the emphasis is upon service and caring and not upon coercive power.

3.36 The Lambeth Conference of bishops first met in 1867. It arose from the missionary concern of the Provinces, particularly the bishops of Canada, but the first moves to establish a meeting of all bishops of the Anglican Communion did not go unopposed. What was said about the identity and role of the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 was cautious:

It has never been contemplated that we should assume the functions of a general synod of all the Churches in full communion with the Church of England, and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding upon those represented. We merely propose to discuss matters of practical interest and pronounce what we deem expedient in resolutions which may serve as safe guides (Lambeth Conferences 1867-1930, SPCK (1948), page 9).

3.37 The consultative rather than legislative role of the Conference was reiterated clearly in 1920:

The Lambeth Conference does not claim to exercise any powers of control. It stands for the far more spiritual and more Christian principle of loyalty to the fellowship. The Churches represented in it are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognizes the restraints of truth and love. They are not free to ignore the fellowship...the Conference is a fellowship in the Spirit (Lambeth Conference 1920, SPCK (1920), Evangelical Letter, page 14).

3.38 A balance is held between denying any power of compliance or control while upholding the need for loyalty to the fellowship expressed in restraint imposed by virtue of belonging to the Communion. No one part should act without regard for the others.

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3.39 In 1958 the Lambeth Conference recognised the need for an executive officer who would serve both the Lambeth Consultative Body and the Advisory Council on Missionary Strategy. It was out of the tireless efforts of the Rt. Rev'd Stephen F. Bayne, Jr. that communication within the Communion was strengthened and a new vision of interdependence and mutual accountability in Anglicanism was shaped. From his work, and that of his successor, Archbishop Ralph Dean, came the vision of a Consultative Council.

3.40 The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) was established by a resolution of the 1968 Lambeth Conference. The Conference recognised that there was a need for more contact between the Churches of the Anglican Communion than that provided by the Lambeth Conference every ten years by bringing together bishops, presbyters and laity, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to work on common concerns. The Council met for the first time at Limuru, Kenya in 1971.

3.41 Resolution 69 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference set out areas of ministry belonging to the Anglican Consultative Council:

1. To share information about developments in one or more provinces with the other parts of the Communion and to serve as needed as an instrument of common action.
2. To advise on inter-Anglican, provincial, and diocesan relationships, including the division of provinces, the formation of new provinces and of regional councils and the problems of extraprovincial dioceses.
3. To develop as far as possible agreed Anglican policies in the world mission of the Church and to encourage national and regional Churches to engage together in developing and implementing such policies by sharing their resources of man power, money, and experience to the best advantage of all.
4. To keep before national and regional Churches the importance of the fullest possible Anglican collaboration with other Christian Churches.
5. To encourage and guide Anglican participation in the ecumenical movement and the ecumenical organisations; to co-operate with the World Council of Churches and the world confessional bodies on behalf of the Anglican Communion; and to make arrangements for the conduct of pan-Anglican conversations with the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches and other Churches.
6. To advise on matters arising out of national or regional Church union negotiations or conversations and on subsequent relations with united Churches.
7. To advise on problems of inter-Anglican communication and to help in the dissemination of Anglican and ecumenical information.
8. To keep in review the needs that may arise for further study and, where necessary, to promote inquiry and research.

3.42 The Anglican Consultative Council meets every three years and its Standing Committee annually. Its constitution and functions have been clearly set out and agreed to by the Provinces, and it has been incorporated as the legal entity for the Communion. In 1988 the members of the ACC were invited participants without vote at the Lambeth Conference. They have been invited to Lambeth 1998.

3.43 Its most vital purpose, however, like the Lambeth Conference, is to establish a communion of mutual attentiveness, interdependence and accountability to serve the unity

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and interdependence in mission of the Anglican Communion. The mutual attentiveness required when members from various parts of the Communion share the richness of their experiences also helps to form the mind of the Communion and is a reminder of the rich diversity of gifts which God has given us. The sharing of stories enhances and deepens the Communion's experience of interdependence at all levels.

3.44 Important to this process are representatives who are able not only to bring the concerns and stories of their Provinces with them but carry the proceedings of the council back to their communities, at the Provincial, national and diocesan levels. Only this constant interchange will provide the basis on which member Churches are able to develop and maintain constant relations and full communion with their sisters and brothers around the world. Each Provincial Church has a responsibility to assist their representatives to carry out this task.

3.45 The gathering of bishops, priests and laity at the meetings of the Anglican Consultative Council since Kenya 1971 provides a much needed opportunity for the opinions and experiences of the Communion to be shared.

3.46 The 1978 Lambeth Conference approved a proposal that the Archbishop of Canterbury convene a regular Meeting of the Primates. At that Conference Archbishop Coggan said:

"...I am coming to believe that the way forward in the coming years - and it may be a slow process will be along two lines: first, to have meetings of the Primates of the Communion reasonably often, for leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation. There have been such meetings, but on very informal and rare bases. I believe they should be held perhaps as frequently as once in two years. But if that meeting now on some fairly regular basis is to be fruitful, those primates would have to come to such meetings well informed with a knowledge of the mind and will of their brothers whom they represent. Then they would be channels through which the voice of the member Churches would be heard, and real interchange of mind and will and heart could take place. That's the first thing.

The second line, I think, on which we might make progress would be to see that the body of Primates, as they meet, should be in the very closest and most intimate contact with the ACC."

3.47 The minutes of the 1979 Meeting of the Primates comment that:

The role of a Primates' meeting could not be, and was not desired as a higher synod... Rather it was a clearing house for ideas and experience through free expression, the fruits of which the Primates might convey to their Churches.

3.48 Since then, meetings of the Primates have become occasions of debate and discussion of personal and Provincial matters in the context of eucharist, prayer and study, in which the primates have achieved, in spite of the constantly changing membership of the group, a deep sense of fraternity that has nourished the unity of the Communion. At a meeting of the Primates at Newcastle, Northern Ireland in 1991, the Primates considered that the primary importance of meeting is the building and maintenance of personal relationships:

- (a) as a sign of the unity and catholicity of the Church;
- (b) to give high profile to important issues;
- (c) for mutual support and counsel.

