

# **For the Sake of the Gospel: Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministries in the Anglican and Uniting Churches in Australia**

## **1 Preamble**

- 1.1 The eighth Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, meeting in Perth in July 1997, resolved *inter alia* that ‘proposals for “the mutual recognition of ministries” currently being implemented in other countries ... be studied, with a view to comparable action in Australia; and that in particular, mutual recognition of ordination be sought with the Anglican Church, acknowledging all the work that has already been done.’ In a communication to the General Synod of the Anglican Church, the Assembly asked the General Synod ‘to agree to enter into an intentional dialogue with the Uniting Church, aimed at the mutual recognition of ministries’ and ‘to agree to the appointment of a special joint working group to carry out this process, and to appoint the Anglican members of such a group.’<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 The General Synod of the Anglican Church, meeting in February 1998, resolved *inter alia* to ‘[accept] the invitation of The Uniting Church in Australia to further develop an intentional dialogue with that church giving particular consideration to mutual recognition of ministries as a step towards the unity that is Christ’s will for his Church, and [agreed] to the setting-up of a special Joint Working Group for this purpose.’ The General Synod requested its Standing Committee to appoint ‘a representative group of Anglican members’ to the proposed Joint Working Group. It further stated that it would ‘welcome a report ... together with recommendations, when General Synod meets again in 2001.’<sup>2</sup>
- 1.3 The two churches appointed their members of the Joint Working Group in 1998. The membership of the group has been as follows:

### ***The Anglican Church of Australia***

The Rt Rev Richard Appleby (Brisbane)  
The Rev Stephen Fifer<sup>3</sup> (Sydney)  
The Rev Canon Dr Barbara Howard  
(Newcastle)  
The Rev Dr Warren Huffa (Adelaide)  
The Rev Dr Stephen Pickard (Canberra)  
The Rev Dr Rowan Strong (Perth)

### ***The Uniting Church in Australia***

The Rev Prof Chris Mostert (Melbourne)  
The Rev Prof Robert Gribben (Melbourne)  
The Rev John Keane (Kadina, SA)  
The Rev Dr Anita Monro (Brisbane)  
The Rev Graham Perry<sup>4</sup> (Sydney)  
The Rev Dr John Squires (Sydney)  
Ms Janet Wood (Melbourne)

Bishop Richard Appleby and Professor Chris Mostert were the co-chairpersons of the group, appointed by their respective churches. The co-secretaries were Dr Warren Huffa and Ms Janet Wood.

- 1.4 The Joint Working Group came together for its first meeting at Otira College, Melbourne, in January 1999. Two meetings have been held each year, with a fifth meeting in February 2001. The group has met for two days on each occasion. Each meeting has included a celebration of the eucharist. From the beginning the dialogue has taken place in an atmosphere of frankness, openness and trust. The group is grateful to God for

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<sup>1</sup> A letter from the Rev Gregor Henderson to the Rev Dr Bruce Kaye, 3 September 1997.

<sup>2</sup> General Synod minute 29/98.

<sup>3</sup> The Rev Stephen Fifer joined the group in 2000.

<sup>4</sup> The Rev Graham Perry joined the group in September 2000, following the resignation of the Rev Dr John Squires, who had been prevented by illness from attending meetings.

guiding it through some challenging issues to the point at which it can make this report to the Anglican General Synod and the Uniting Church Assembly.

## 1.5 A framework for the conversation

- 1.5.1 The Joint Working Group recognised that the goal of the mutual recognition of ordained ministries between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia is not attainable in one step. The steps that may be taken by churches seeking to remove the barriers between them, especially in the sphere of ministry, may be seen in terms of stages of recognition, operating at local, regional and national levels. At the local and regional levels there may be covenants of co-operation made with approval from an Anglican Synod and a Uniting Church Presbytery.<sup>5</sup> The task given to this Joint Working Group is concerned with the national level.
- 1.5.2 At the national level four stages are identified in the document, *Steps to Unity: An Outline Process for Ecumenical Convergence from an Anglican Perspective*:<sup>6</sup>
- (a) a statement of agreement on essentials of faith and ministry;
  - (b) a covenant of association and inter-communion;
  - (c) a concordat of communion;
  - (d) full organic union.
- 1.5.3 The Joint Working Group was guided by this approach to stages of recognition, which is reflected in the report which follows. The report first considers the essentials of faith and ministry which are shared by both churches. This includes consideration of the key issue of the ordained ministry in our churches. Two affirmations are then made about faith and ministry, which leads to a declaration of agreement on essentials of faith and ministry. Proposals are then made for a covenant of association and inter-communion, which involve a limited recognition of ordained ministries. The report identifies further challenges and tasks for both churches.

## 2 Our Christian heritage

### 2.1 Our unity in Christ

The dynamic of Christian unity lies deep in the heart of God, in the *koinonia* between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. God desires nothing less than that the intimate communion between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit should be reflected in the life of the Church. In Jesus Christ God has reconciled us to himself, and enlisted us in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). Our Lord prayed that his followers might be one, sharing in the unity that exists between the Father and the Son (John 17:16ff.). Jesus Christ is the peace between people who are divided, creating in himself one new humanity (Eph 2:14ff.). Even while we remain divided from each other through separate structures, separated ministries and different polities, we acknowledge that we also share many things, including the unity which is ours in Christ, a shared call to ministry and a shared call to participation in the mission of the triune God in the world. We desire to express more fully in our ecclesial life this unity which is ours in Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, The Code of Practice for Local Co-operation in Victoria between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia is an excellent example of a covenant of this kind.

<sup>6</sup> *Steps to Unity: An Outline Process for Ecumenical Convergence from an Anglican Perspective*, 1999. This document is the basis for ecumenical dialogue authorised by the Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia.

## 2.2 Historical background

Within the context of modern European history, our roots are predominantly in the English and Scottish churches, which were renewed by the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Our forebears maintained close links with each other during and after the Reformation. At other times our relationships have included hostility and sharp division. We regret that ignorance and misunderstanding have kept us apart, both in the context of the United Kingdom and in the very different circumstances of European settlement in this land. We thank God for bringing us together across our differences and divisions to forge new relationships in a new situation, with new challenges.

## 2.3 Our distinctive identities

The Anglican Church of Australia identifies itself by its acceptance, as ‘agreeable to the Word of God’, of the Book of Common Prayer of 1662, its Ordinal, and the Articles of Religion. As a national church it is bound by the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia as adopted in 1962 and subsequently amended. The Anglican Church seeks to relate with other churches on the basis of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of Scripture, Creeds, Sacraments and the Historic Episcopate. In Australia the basis for the Anglican approach to ecumenical relationships is set out in the document, *Steps to Unity* (1999).

The Uniting Church in Australia came into being in 1977 as a union between the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Methodists and Presbyterians had been internally divided but had overcome these divisions at the time of federation. The Uniting Church identifies itself by *The Basis of Union* (1971, 1992).<sup>7</sup> It claims continuity with the Reformed and evangelical traditions and is committed to continue to learn from the Scots Confession of Faith (1560), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), the Savoy Declaration (1658), and from the preaching of John Wesley, notably his Forty-four Sermons.<sup>8</sup>

## 3 The history of our dialogue

### 3.1 Our two churches have been in official dialogue since 1979. The goal of early conversations was ‘mutual recognition’. In 1980 the dialogue group declared as follows:

We declare to each other as churches, and to the world, that we recognise within each other’s congregations the preaching of the Word of God according to the Scriptures, the due administration of the sacraments according to Christ’s ordinance in all things needful, the confession of the apostolic faith and the experience of the fruits of the Spirit. We therefore believe that there is a true participation in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in our respective churches even as we acknowledge that we fail, in different ways, to express fully and visibly the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church of God. Therefore –

- (a) we recognise each other’s baptism, and affirm our common membership and ministry in the one holy catholic and apostolic Church;
- (b) we welcome each other’s members to Holy Communion in our Churches, and encourage our members to accept this invitation;

<sup>7</sup> The 1992 text of *The Basis of Union* is unchanged in substance but incorporates relatively conservative changes to the language, retaining the meaning of the original (1971) text.

<sup>8</sup> Basis of Union, §10.

(c) we recognise each other's ministries of the Word and sacraments, while acknowledging that they show distinctive marks, emphases and differences exercised within different structures and disciplines.

- 3.2 This statement was approved by the Uniting Church National Assembly in 1982. In 1984 the statement was incorporated into a report made to the Anglican General Synod. The report was received for circulation to the Anglican Church for study and discussion. The 1984 report included a section entitled 'Stages of Recognition and the Way Ahead'.
- 3.3 In pursuit of the goal of mutual recognition, statements on baptism and the eucharist were considered by both churches. The Agreed Statement on Baptism was adopted by the Anglican General Synod and the Uniting Church Assembly in 1985. A proposed Agreed Statement on the Eucharist was adopted by the Uniting Church Assembly in 1991 and approved as a basis for further discussion by the Anglican General Synod in 1992.
- 3.4 Subsequent meetings of the dialogue group, located in Sydney from late 1994, explored additional aspects of the task of giving fuller expression to our unity in Christ, as well as discussing those differences in our worship, our polity and our theology of ministry that stood in the way of further unity. The initiative for the present dialogue came in the context of this ongoing dialogue.
- 3.5 The current dialogue occurs within a much wider ecumenical context of national and international dialogues in which major advances in inter-church relations have occurred. In the early 1980s *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM)<sup>9</sup> emerged as a basic foundation for all future ecumenical efforts. In the 1990s a number of major dialogues have resulted in genuine and hopeful moves toward recognition and reconciliation of ministries. Significant for this dialogue have been ARCIC, Meissen and Porvoo.<sup>10</sup> In particular, the Meissen Declaration provides a good model for our present dialogue in so far as it involved conversations between episcopal and non-episcopally ordered churches. One of the major issues on the agenda of these conversations has been the possibilities for closer ties between the churches through shared ministries, both practically and formally. Recent dialogues in Australia between the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Churches have resulted in important declarations concerning faith and order which have also been influential in this dialogue.

## **4 The faith we hold in common: essentials of faith and ministry**

We identify the following essentials of faith and ministry which our churches share.

### **4.1 The Holy Trinity**

Both our churches confess and worship one God in three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> This trinitarian faith finds expression in the doctrine and the liturgical life of each church.

<sup>9</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), Faith and Order Paper No. 111.

<sup>10</sup> ARCIC: Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, which issued *The Final Report* (on the eucharist, the ministry and ordination, and authority in the Church) in 1981, and published *The Gift of Authority* (which included 'Steps Towards Visible Unity') in 1999. Meissen: *On the Way to Visible Unity: A Common Statement*, Meissen, 1988, between the Church of England, the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic, and the Evangelical Church in Germany in the Federal Republic of Germany. Porvoo: *The Porvoo Common Statement*, including *The Porvoo Declaration*, agreed to by the Church of England, the Church of Ireland and the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches of the Scandinavian and Baltic countries in 1994-96. For a full list of overseas dialogues studied by the Joint Working Group see the Appendix.

<sup>11</sup> See the 'Articles of Religion' 1, 2 & 5; *The Basis of Union*, §§1 & 3.

## 4.2 Jesus Christ

Both our churches confess Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, truly human and truly divine. Christ, who was crucified and raised from the dead for the salvation of the world, is Lord of all things and the beginning of the new creation.<sup>12</sup>

## 4.3 The Holy Scriptures

Both our churches receive the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as authoritative witnesses to God's revelation in Jesus Christ. As prophetic and apostolic testimony, they contain all things necessary to salvation. Our churches seek to be nourished and regulated in their faith, life and doctrine by these Scriptures.<sup>13</sup>

## 4.4 The ancient creeds

Both our churches receive the ecumenical Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Apostles' Creed as authoritative statements of the catholic faith, and encourage their use in worship and teaching.<sup>14</sup>

## 4.5 The Church

Both churches hold that the Church is constituted and sustained by the triune God, through God's saving action in word and sacraments. The Church is called into being by Jesus Christ, who is its head and Lord. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is a sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God. We recognise that the Church stands in constant need of reform and renewal in order to grow into that unity and holiness which is both God's gift and God's calling.<sup>15</sup>

## 4.6 Baptism

Both churches believe that through baptism with water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church, and receive the gracious gift of forgiveness of sins and new life in the Spirit. Through the grace of God we receive by faith these and all other benefits of the work of Christ. (See the Agreed Statement on Baptism, 1985, Appendix 2.)<sup>16</sup>

## 4.7 The eucharist

We believe that in the eucharist we celebrate the remembrance of the crucified and risen Christ, the living and effective sign of his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative on behalf of all humankind. In the eucharistic remembrance we call to mind the dying and rising of Christ, and anticipate his coming again. It is the effectual proclamation of God's mighty acts and promises. We believe that in the eucharist Christ unites us with himself and draws us into his self-offering to the Father, the one, full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice which he has offered for us all. We believe that in the eucharist we participate in the body and blood of Christ, given under the forms of bread and wine and received by faith. Thus in him, crucified and risen, we receive the forgiveness of sins and all other benefits of his passion. In the eucharist it is God who

<sup>12</sup> See the 'Articles of Religion' 2 & 3; *The Basis of Union*, §§2 & 3.

<sup>13</sup> See the 'Articles of Religion' 6, 7 & 20; *The Basis of Union*, §5.

<sup>14</sup> See the 'Articles of Religion' 8; *The Basis of Union*, §9. Note that the form of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed used by the Anglican Church includes the *filioque*, while the Uniting Church omits it.

<sup>15</sup> See the 'Articles of Religion', 19 & 20, and *The Basis of Union*, §§4, 17 & 18.

<sup>16</sup> See also the 'Articles of Religion', 27, and *The Basis of Union*, §§6, 7 & 12.

acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. God reconstitutes and nourishes the Church for its ministry in the world, and strengthens it in faith and hope, in witness and service in daily life, giving a foretaste of the eternal joy of the kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4.8 Worship

Both churches believe that God graciously meets us in word and sacrament when we gather for praise and prayer in the name of Christ. In worship we celebrate and proclaim our salvation in Christ, and we are built up in the unity and faith of the one holy, catholic, apostolic Church. There are many similarities in our liturgical life, although we recognise a difference in the degree to which approved orders of worship are to be used. We share a common tradition of hymns, psalms and prayers.

#### 4.9 Mission

Both churches believe that the mission of God, in which the Church participates, is to bring all things to fulfilment in Christ Jesus.<sup>18</sup> We share a common hope in the final consummation of the Kingdom of God and believe that we are called to work now for justice and peace, for the reconciliation of all humankind and to care for the created world.<sup>19</sup> Both churches believe that this apostolic mission is entrusted to all members of the Church. For this they are given various gifts and forms of service (ministry) by the Holy Spirit. All Christians are called to offer themselves ‘as a living sacrifice’ in the service of Christ to the world.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4.10 The ordained ministry

Both churches have an ordained ministry which exists to serve the Church in its worship and mission and whose task it is constantly to recall the Church to its fundamental dependence in all things on the triune God. We see the ordained ministry as part of God’s provision for the Church from its earliest times. ‘As Christ chose and sent the apostles, Christ continues through the Holy Spirit to choose and call persons into the ordained ministry.’<sup>21</sup> Both churches take very special care for the selection, education and formation of men and women for the ordained ministry.<sup>22</sup> Both churches exercise oversight (*episkopé*) over those who have been ordained.

#### 4.11 Apostolic faith and ministry: a first affirmation

*We affirm that our churches share in the continuity of apostolic faith and ministry, while acknowledging our failures and brokenness in our mutual discipleship of Jesus Christ. We see in each other’s churches an authentic desire to witness faithfully to the Gospel and to be engaged in God’s mission in the world. As a consequence of affirming in each other’s churches the essentials of faith and ministry, we recognise in each other’s churches the presence of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup> We further recognise that in each of our churches there is a real and effective expression of the proclamation of the Word, an authentic celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, and an accountable practice of pastoral ministry.<sup>24</sup>*

<sup>17</sup> See the ‘Articles of Religion’, 28; *Basis of Union*, §§6 & 8.

<sup>18</sup> Col. 1:15-20.

<sup>19</sup> See *On the Way to Visible Unity: A Common Statement*, §15 (x).

<sup>20</sup> *An Australian Prayer Book* (1978), ‘The Holy Communion’, Second Order, §27. and *The Basis of Union*, §§3 & 4.

<sup>21</sup> See *BEM*, Ministry, §11,

<sup>22</sup> See the ‘Articles of Religion’ 23; *The Basis of Union*, §§13 & 14.

<sup>23</sup> Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia, section 1, and *The Basis of Union*, §§2 & 3.

<sup>24</sup> See the ‘Articles of Religion’ 19, 23 & 25; *The Basis of Union*, §§2,3 & 4.

## **5. Toward Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministries: Consensus and Differences**

### **5.1 Church and Ministry**

We endorse the view expressed in the ‘Ministry’ statement of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (World Council of Churches, 1982) that ‘the New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church.’ (§19). To accept that a normative pattern of three orders of ministry (bishop, presbyter and deacon) was established during the second and third centuries and continues to be an integral part of many churches’ ordering of their ministries does not imply that the Holy Spirit has not been at work in churches with other patterns of ordained ministry. We are agreed that there is a reciprocal relationship between the Church and the ordained ministry. Church and ministry are given in and with each other; neither has an ontological priority over the other and neither exists apart from the other. We affirm that both our churches have recognised the givenness of an ordained ministry, even though they have adopted different forms of it.

### **5.2 Frameworks for ministry**

Just as the Church can think of its life and work only in the framework of the mission of the triune God in the world, so the ordained ministry is to be seen within this framework; indeed, this is the most encompassing framework in which to locate it. The Church is the creation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the ministries of the Church likewise owe their existence to the call of Jesus Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The ordained ministry has no justification apart from the ‘economy of salvation’ that expresses the unfathomable love of God. However, as stated above, another framework for locating the ordained ministry – not in conflict with the larger framework just described – is the life and work of the Church. The ministry is established to serve the Church, by guiding and directing its liturgical, educational and pastoral life toward the praise and service of God in the world. In particular, its task is to point the Church continually to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ (*BEM*, ‘Ministry’, §8) and, through word and sacrament, to equip the Church for its life and work. Ordained ministers are called also to provide unity in the midst of many ministries exercised individually by church members on the basis of their gifts. Ordination may also be seen within the framework of baptism and confirmation. The ministries for which the Church ordains people are a further and more particular expression of the general commission for service (ministry) which is implicit in baptism. Ordination assumes baptism, and the ministry committed to people through ordination is a particular focus of their baptismal calling.

### **5.3 Orders of ministry in the two churches**

The Anglican Church has historically had three orders of ministry: the ministries of bishop, priest and deacon. The Uniting Church inherited a diverse pattern of ministry from its antecedent denominations, but instituted at its inception the ministry of the Word as the only form of ministry for which people were ordained. Subsequently, in 1991 the Assembly established a renewed diaconate, open to women and men, to take the place of the earlier ministry of deaconess, and resolved to ordain people for this ministry. Thus the Uniting Church has two orders of ministry: the ministries of minister of the Word and deacon.<sup>25</sup> (The phrase ‘minister of the Word’ embraces both the ministry of the word and the sacraments.)

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<sup>25</sup> *The Basis of Union*, §14 (a) & (c).

## 5.4 The ministry of oversight (*episkopé*)

5.4.1 A ministry of oversight is recognised by both churches as being ‘necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body’.<sup>26</sup> As with all ordained ministry, this *episkopé* should have three dimensions, the personal, collegial and communal.<sup>27</sup> The Meissen Declaration affirms that ‘a ministry of pastoral oversight (*episkopé*), exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways, is necessary to witness to and safeguard the unity and apostolicity of the Church.’<sup>28</sup>

### 5.4.2 The ministry of oversight in the Anglican Church

The Anglican Church is committed by the Lambeth Quadrilateral to the ‘historic episcopate, locally adapted’. This is understood to be ‘some form of *episcopus* in ordained ministry, exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways, which expresses the principles both of service and oversight implicit in Jesus’ own teaching about servants and shepherds.’<sup>29</sup> The Anglican Church of Australia is bound by its Constitution to ‘preserve the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons in the sacred ministry’, and has no power to alter this requirement.<sup>30</sup>

Anglicanism understands the whole body of Anglicans in that Church to be distinguished in three ways for the purposes of ecclesiastical order. These ways are commonly known as ‘houses’ of bishops, clergy and laity. Each of these houses shares, to a greater or lesser extent, in the three dimensions of *episkopé* – communal, collegial and personal.

#### Communal *episkopé*

This dimension of oversight is understood to be church-wide, or involving all three houses in oversight of the church. Bishops, clergy and laity participate in this dimension of oversight in the General Synods of a national or provincial church, and in the synods of each diocese. In Australia, the same three houses meet in the provincial councils or synods of the five internal provinces of the national church. Such oversight requires the majority consent of all three houses to pass legislation valid for the whole national church. At the international level, the Anglican Consultative Council brings representative bishops, clergy and laity together to share in the oversight of the Anglican Communion through consultation and recommendations. At the local level the annual general meeting of every parish also involves the laity and the parish clergy under the authority of the diocesan bishop in the communal oversight of Anglicans locally.

#### Collegial *episkopé*

This involves cooperation within one house or across two houses for matters of ecclesiastical oversight. At the local level, parish councils or vestries unite parish clergy and laity in oversight of some aspects of parish life under the communal oversight of synodical legislation and the personal oversight of the diocesan bishop. Meetings of bishops within a province or across the whole national church collegially unite the bishops in the oversight of the church beyond their own dioceses. The requirement for consultation and mutuality in this collegial oversight of the diocesan bishops is also expressed in diocesan councils of clergy and laity, who share with the bishop the collegial oversight of dioceses. It is further maintained by the regular meetings of all Anglican primatial bishops, and the

<sup>26</sup> See *BEM*; Ministry, §23.

<sup>27</sup> See *BEM*; Ministry, §26.

<sup>28</sup> *On the Way to Visible Unity: A Common Statement*, §15 (ix).

<sup>29</sup> *Steps to Unity: An Outline Process for Ecumenical Convergence from an Anglican Perspective*, 1999, §5.2.

<sup>30</sup> The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia, sections 3 & 66.

decennial consultations of Anglican bishops across the whole Communion, known as the Lambeth Conferences.

### **Personal episkopé**

This is the oversight granted to individuals within the church. This is also found in various forms throughout the Anglican Communion. Laity appointed to ecclesiastical positions may exercise personal oversight within the confines of their appointed position. Clergy exercise personal *episkopé*, particularly for the ministry of word and sacraments, within the ministries to which they have been licensed under the personal oversight of a diocesan bishop. In relation to worship, preaching and teaching, spiritual life, and the administration of the sacraments, the priest has an oversight delegated directly from the diocesan bishop. In general, the priest works with the parish council/vestry in this oversight but retains authority for them in his or her ministry. A measure of personal *episkopé* is also exercised by an Anglican archbishop or a primate over a province. The Archbishop of Canterbury has a consultative, non-binding personal oversight for the unity of the whole Anglican Communion. However, the most significant expression of personal episkopé in the Anglican Church is that of the diocesan bishop. In Anglicanism the fundamental unit of the church is the diocese. This is the local church, over which the bishop exercises a personal *episkopé* as its Ordinary, or normal, pastor. Over a local church or diocese, therefore, personal *episkopé* in the Anglican Church is the charism of the diocesan bishop, who is ordained in the historic episcopal succession. This episcopal succession is one sign of the apostolicity of the church, or the continuity of the church in the apostolic faith over time. It is essential to the oversight of the bishop to ensure that as the church engages in mission to the world it maintains its faithfulness to the apostolic Gospel. The historic succession of bishops or church leaders has its roots in the first centuries of the Church. The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia commits Anglicans without possibility of change to such episcopal ministry.<sup>31</sup> However, this commitment does not preclude recognition of the validity of non-episcopal churches, or of the existence of *episkopé* in some forms in such churches. As the bishop has oversight of the church and its mission, so it belongs to the bishop's *episkopé* to be an instrumental sign and focus of the unity of the local church (diocese) which the bishop leads.

#### **5.4.3 The ministry of oversight in the Uniting Church**

In the Uniting Church the ministry of oversight is exercised in a conciliar manner, i.e. through councils of the church. There are communal, collegial and personal dimensions to this oversight.

### **Communal episkopé**

The *Basis of Union* describes the communal dimension of oversight in these words:

The Uniting Church recognises that responsibility for government in the Church belongs to the people of God by virtue of the gifts and tasks which God has laid upon them. The Uniting Church therefore so organises its life that locally, regionally and nationally government will be entrusted to representatives, men and women, bearing the gifts and graces with which God has endowed them for the building up of the Church. The Uniting Church is governed by a series of inter-related councils, each of which has its tasks and responsibilities in relation both to the Church and the world.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia, section 3.

<sup>32</sup> *The Basis of Union*, §15.

(a) **The Congregation:** The congregation, as a local embodiment of the one holy catholic apostolic church, has responsibility for the ordering of its own life and its participation in the mission of the whole church. It exercises oversight of its life through regular meetings of the members and through its church council, which consists of the minister and those who are called to share with the minister in oversight.

(b) **The Presbytery (district council):** The Presbytery exercises oversight over the life and mission of the church in the area for which it is responsible, including the congregations within its bounds. The Presbytery consists of the ministers and an equal number of other church members appointed by the congregations. The Presbytery's roles include pastoral and administrative oversight of ministers and pastoral charges; the selection of candidates for ministry and their ordination; and the administration of property matters within the bounds.

(c) **The Synod:** The Synod is the regional council with responsibility for the general oversight, direction and administration of the church's worship, witness and service in the region allotted to it. It consists of an equal number of ministers and other church members, appointed by presbyteries and Synod agencies.

(d) **The Assembly:** The Assembly is the national council, with determining responsibility for matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline, including the promotion of the church's mission and the taking of further measures towards the wider union of the church. It consists of an equal number of ministers and other church members, appointed by presbyteries, synods, and Assembly agencies.

In these ways all the members of the church share in responsibility for oversight of the life and work of the church in every part.

### **Collegial *episkopé***

Collegial oversight involves cooperation, mutual care and accountability, both between the inter-related councils and among the members of each council. The *Basis of Union* describes the collegial dimension of oversight between the councils in these words:

It is the task of every council to wait upon God's Word, and to obey God's will in the matters allocated to its oversight. Each council will recognise the limits of its own authority and give heed to other councils of the Church, so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the Gospel.<sup>33</sup>

In particular, it is obligatory for the Assembly to seek the concurrence of the other councils and, on occasion, of the congregations of the church, on matters of vital importance to the life of the church.

Within each council it is the task of each member to wait upon God's word, to recognise the limits of their own authority and to give heed to the other members of the council, so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the Gospel. To further this end, the Uniting Church has adopted a process of decision-making by consensus.

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<sup>33</sup> *The Basis of Union*, §15.

## Personal *episkopé*

In the Uniting Church *episkopé* is exercised not only through councils and committees but also personally. ‘The Uniting Church sees in pastoral care exercised personally on behalf of the Church an expression of the fact that God always deals personally with people...’<sup>34</sup>

In practice, personal *episkopé* is exercised by officers of every council, in particular by the minister within the congregation, by the Presbytery Chairperson and the Presbytery Minister within the Presbytery, by the moderator of the Synod and by the president of the Assembly. These personal ministries of oversight are a significant part of the life of the Uniting Church.

### 5.5 An important difference

Whilst there is considerable overlap in the theology of ministry of our two churches, the greatest obstacle to a fuller ecclesial expression of our unity in Christ is at the points where our doctrines of ministry and our polity diverge. In short, the Anglican Church of Australia is an episcopal church; the Uniting Church in Australia is not. The fact that ministers of the Uniting Church have not been ordained by a bishop in the historic succession has resulted in their not being recognised without qualification as ordained ministers in the Church of God. Uniting Church ministers seeking to become recognised as ministers in the Anglican Church have invariably had to be ordained again by a bishop, first as a deacon and subsequently as a priest, since episcopal ordination is required by the Preface to the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer of 1662.<sup>35</sup> The unalterable Ruling Principles of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia enshrine this requirement.

### 5.6 Bishops in the Uniting Church?

In the proposed Basis of Union attached to the Second Report of the Joint Commission on Church Union, *The Church: Its Nature, Function and Ordering* (1964), it was proposed that there should be essentially one ‘order’ of the (ordained) ministry in the Uniting Church, comprising three different ministries, *viz.* presbyters, bishops and deacons. The personal episcopate of bishops was to be exercised within the corporate episcopate exercised by the Presbytery. In addition, there was to be a concordat with the Church of South India, in order that the episcopate of the Uniting Church should be integrated with the episcopate of the wider church. For a variety of reasons, these proposals were not proceeded with, and the *Basis of Union* of 1971 includes no provision for bishops in the Uniting Church, nor for the concordat with the Church of South India. The 1985 Assembly reopened the discussion of bishops for the Uniting Church.<sup>36</sup> The responses to the question whether such a step should be taken were generally negative, and the 1991 Assembly resolved ‘without prejudice to any decisions in future Assemblies’ not to proceed with the introduction of an office of bishop. Whether the Uniting Church would come to a different view if such a proposal were part of a scheme of union with a church such as the Anglican Church of Australia would need to be carefully considered. Furthermore, whether the position of Presbytery minister has developed to the stage where its benefits to the church might incline members of the Uniting Church to a different view on the question of bishops would also need to be tested.

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<sup>34</sup> *The Basis of Union*, §16.

<sup>35</sup> ‘... no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to the Form hereafter following, or have had formerly Episcopal Consecration, or Ordination.’

<sup>36</sup> See the Assembly document, *Bishops in the Uniting Church?*, 1988.

## 5.7 Priest/Minister of the Word

- 5.7.1 In the Uniting Church the minister of the Word has responsibility in the local congregation for the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the pastoral care of the people of God.<sup>37</sup> Authority for this ministry is given in and with ordination. It is the Presbytery that ordains, the Chairperson presiding over the act of ordination. The laying on of hands at the ordination includes representatives of ordained ministers and lay people.<sup>38</sup>
- 5.7.2 In the Anglican Church the priest is charged at ordination to preach the Word of God, administer the sacraments, and exercise pastoral care.<sup>39</sup> This threefold responsibility of ‘the office and work of a priest’ is delegated by the bishop in ordination. The priest is thus given a share in the *episkopé* of the bishop, to whom the priest is accountable. In the presence of the people and with their consent, the ordaining bishop (the ‘chief minister and pastor’) ‘with the priests present ... lay their hands’ on each ordinand.<sup>40</sup>
- 5.7.3 The orders of minister of the Word and priest share a common ministry given in ordination, notwithstanding the different ecclesial frameworks within which these two orders of ministry are established and operate. They have essentially the same function of preaching the word, administering the sacraments, and exercising pastoral care, for the purpose of enabling the community of faith to serve Christ in the world. Both churches provide clear structures of oversight and accountability for this ministry.

## 5.8 The Diaconate

- 5.8.1 Both churches ordain men and women to the diaconate. Diaconal ministry is undergoing an exciting renaissance in the churches today. Both Anglican and Uniting Churches give expression to this renewal liturgically and in wider practice. The renewal of diaconal ministry is underpinned by a strong theology of the incarnation of the love of Christ in the world. Both churches set the deacon within appropriate structures of accountability within their own polity.
- 5.8.2 In the case of the Uniting Church the renewal of the diaconate is a recent development. *The Basis of Union* provided for the possibility that the Uniting Church might at some future time renew the ministry of deacon [§14 (c)], a possibility which was realised at the 1991 Assembly. The diaconate in the Uniting Church is essentially a ministry of service in the world beyond the congregation, holding before the church a model of service among people who suffer. As the ‘Ministry’ statement in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry states, ‘Deacons represent to the church its calling as servant in the world.’ (§31) The ministry of deacon is ‘motivated by a vision of the justice of God which protects and defends the disadvantaged...’<sup>41</sup> In the Uniting Church the ministry of the Word and the ministry of deacon are complementary, distinguishable ministries but not hierarchically related. Each ministry includes elements of the other and would be incomplete without the other. Deacons, like ministers of the Word, are accountable for their ministry to the Presbytery.

<sup>37</sup> *The Basis of Union*, §14(a); Regulation 2.3.10.

<sup>38</sup> See Regulations 2.3.1 – 2.3.4, concerning the ordination of a minister of the Word.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Take authority to preach the word of God, and to administer the holy sacraments in the congregation to which you shall be lawfully appointed to do so.’ *An Australian Prayer Book*, ‘The Ordering of Priests’, A.I.O. Press, 1978, §12. Also the exhortation, ‘... I exhort you ... to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord; to teach and forewarn, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family, to seek for Christ’s sheep who are scattered abroad ...’ AAPB, ‘The Ordering of Priests’, §7.

<sup>40</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, 1662, The Ordering of Priests.

<sup>41</sup> *Ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia*, 1991, 41.

- 5.8.3 In the Anglican Church deacons are ordained by the bishop. In the Anglican Church the orders of deacon and priest are ‘progressive’; ordination to the priesthood is via ordination to the diaconate. The deacon has both liturgical and wider responsibilities under the Bishop. The liturgical roles have a primary focus in the reading of the Word, intercessions, and assistance in the administration of the sacraments. Anglican deacons have authority to preach and, in the absence of a priest, to baptise.<sup>42</sup> Beyond the gathered congregation the deacon works under the direction of the priest and/or bishop to serve the needs of the people of God. This latter area has been significantly developed in recent decades as the mission and witness of the church has been undertaken in conditions very different from the more settled contexts of a European religious culture. This radically changed context has been one of the catalysts for a renewed diaconate in the Anglican as in other churches. One feature of this development has been the emergence of a ‘permanent’ diaconate.<sup>43</sup> The identity and purpose of the diaconate is being established as a ministry in its own right rather than as a stepping stone to ordination as priest.
- 5.8.4 Deacons in both our churches have a liturgical and wider social role. The Uniting Church’s fullest articulation of the diaconate can be found in the National Assembly’s 1994 report, *Ordination and Ministry in the Uniting Church*. It is clear from this report and from the liturgy for the ordination of deacons that there is strong overlap with the diaconate in the Anglican Church. Liturgically the deacon undertakes similar functions to the Anglican deacon (but see the exception below). Within the wider society the deacon exercises a diverse ministry which includes pastoral care, prophetic activity, and social engagement. There is substantial consonance between the ministry of deacon in both churches, with one major exception (see below).
- 5.8.5 The major difference in diaconal practice between the Anglican and Uniting churches is that the Uniting Church deacon has authority to preside over the worship of the congregation, including its eucharist. Whilst ordination confers this authority, the sacramental role of deacons is qualified: ‘deacons will usually [preside at the sacraments] in the context of their ministry with broken and marginalised people. They will preside at the celebration of the sacraments within the gathered congregation only in collaboration with the ministerial team and the council of elders.’<sup>44</sup> In practice, a Uniting Church deacon will normally preside at the eucharist in the absence of a Minister of the Word. The Anglican Church is unable to recognise this aspect of the Uniting Church deacon’s ministry, as ordination to the diaconate in the Anglican Church does not include the authority to preside at the eucharist.

## 5.9 Apostolic faith and ministry: a second affirmation

*We affirm that both churches have a common ministry of leadership in the community of faith through the provision of the ordained ministries of presbyter<sup>45</sup> (priest and minister of the Word) and deacon. Notwithstanding the differing ecclesial frameworks of our two churches (episcopal and presbyterial), we affirm that in each of our ordained ministries there is a real and effective expression of the proclamation of the Word, an authentic celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, and an*

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<sup>42</sup> The bishop’s charge to the deacons to be ordained in the liturgy for the ordering of deacons, *Book of Common Prayer*, 1662.

<sup>43</sup> It has become the accepted practice to use the terms ‘diaconate’ and ‘transitional diaconate’ to differentiate between the new (permanent) and the traditional (temporary) forms of the diaconate.

<sup>44</sup> *Ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia*, 1991, 42.

<sup>45</sup> In the Liturgical Principles underlying the ordination services in *A Prayer Book for Australia* it is stated that ‘the term “presbyter” is used in the title for the Ordination of Priests, following Richard Hooker, the Episcopal Church of Scotland, *The Alternative Service Book* of the Church of England, and current Roman Catholic and Orthodox usage’ (*APBA*, 781).

*accountable practice of pastoral oversight. Both churches affirm a ministry of oversight (episkopé) that operates in different, distinct and in some respects comparable forms. In both churches this oversight operates communally, collegially and personally, and its purpose is to safeguard the unity and the apostolic mission of the church. As a result, the Joint Working Group affirms a substantial consonance between the two ministries of priest/minister of the Word and deacon in our two churches.*

## **6. Steps toward a Covenant of Association and Inter-communion: Proposals for the Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministries**

6.1 As stated above, the Joint Working Group has identified four stages toward unity:

(a) **a statement of agreement on essentials of faith and ministry:** this includes statements of substantial agreement and theological convergence on fundamental matters of doctrine and ministry;

(b) **a covenant of association and inter-communion:** this establishes mutual eucharistic hospitality, recognises both churches as churches in which the Gospel is preached and taught, and permits such other things as the two churches intend to do, including the interchange of ministers to the extent permitted by the laws of each church;

(c) **a concordat of communion:** this establishes the fullest and most visible kind of communion between two churches, short of full organic union. Between churches which have entered into a concordat of communion there would be ‘a commitment to the unimpeded interchange of members and ordained ministries at every level’.<sup>46</sup>

(d) **full organic union:** this is the union of two national churches, either within the same confessional tradition or of different traditions. The two churches cease to be what they were and form a new ecclesial body.

### **6.2 Declaration of agreement on essentials of faith and ministry.**

*The report of the Joint Working Group has identified substantial agreement and theological convergence on the essentials of faith and ministry:*

*(a) Both churches hold to the essentials of faith as expressed in summary form in section 4 of this report. This covered the following areas: the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures, the ancient creeds, the church, baptism and the eucharist, worship, mission and ministry. As a consequence, we recognised in each other’s churches the presence of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.*

*(b) In respect of the ordained ministry, the Joint Working Group identified areas of consensus and differences in section 5 of this report. Both churches ordain people to the presbyteral (priest/minister of the Word) and diaconal ministries. Both churches recognise in each other’s presbyteral ministries a real and effective expression of the proclamation of the Word, an authentic celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, and the exercise of pastoral care. Both churches recognise in each other’s diaconate an authentic ministry of service in the church and the world. Both churches recognise that these two orders of ministry operate within a ministry of oversight (episkopé) occurring in various forms. In the light of (a) and (b), the Joint Working Group finds a substantial agreement on the essentials of ministry in respect of these two orders of ministry.*

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<sup>46</sup> *Steps to Unity: an Outline Process for Ecumenical Convergence from an Anglican Perspective*, 1999.

### 6.3 A covenant of association and inter-communion

Our two churches have agreed to be in dialogue for the specific purpose of considering the question of the mutual recognition of ordained ministries, as a step towards the unity that is Christ's will for his Church. On the basis of converging but not yet wholly compatible understandings of the ordained ministry, and sufficient agreement in faith and ministry, together with a marked growing together of our two churches over recent decades, this Joint Working Group proposes that our churches enter into a formal covenant of association and inter-communion on the mutual recognition of ordained ministries.

### 6.4 Limited exchange of ministries

Within the covenant of association and intercommunion and without exceeding the discretion of Anglican bishops and Uniting Church presbyteries there shall be provision for the following exchange of ministries between our churches:

- 6.4.1 the acceptance of **Anglican priests** in Uniting Church placements and in ecumenical ministries where the Uniting Church has the right of appointment;
- 6.4.2 the acceptance of **Uniting Church ministers of the Word** in Anglican appointments such as ecumenical ministries and cooperating parishes where the Anglican Church has the right of appointment;
- 6.4.3 the acceptance of **Anglican deacons** in Uniting Church placements. Anglican deacons in Uniting Church placements shall not preside at the eucharist in the Uniting Church;
- 6.4.4 the acceptance of **Uniting Church deacons** in Anglican diaconal appointments such as ecumenical ministries and cooperating parishes where the Anglican Church has the right of appointment. Such Anglican appointments shall not include the authority to preside at the eucharist.

## 7 Widening the covenant

### 7.1 Steps to be taken

The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia is able to enter into ecumenical agreements and may commit the whole of the Uniting Church to commitments undertaken in the course of a covenant of association and inter-communion. In the Anglican Church of Australia the matter is less straightforward; the General Synod may not enter into a covenant of association without consulting with other churches in the Anglican communion. In order for any diocesan bishop or diocese to accept the covenant of association and inter-communion entered into with the Uniting Church by the General Synod, it would have to be adopted by the Synod of that diocese. Nevertheless, the decisive decision in this matter is the responsibility of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia and must be made by the General Synod.

### 7.2 Constitutional constraints upon the Anglican Church of Australia

To move beyond this Covenant of Association and Inter-communion it will be necessary to clarify the precise canonical procedure proposed for steps towards further unity. It has been observed from some agreements between Anglican and other churches overseas that

there is provision for anomalies such as the acceptance for an interim period by an Anglican Church of ministers from another church who have not been episcopally ordained. The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia does not allow for such anomalies.

### **7.3 The hope for unity**

Given the brief from our churches to consider the mutual recognition of ministries, the proposal for the Covenant of Association and Inter-communion is necessarily limited. The Joint Working Group offers this proposal in the hope and expectation that our two churches will develop further the Covenant to incorporate other dimensions of the life of our churches. The Joint Working Group hopes and prays that the Covenant will lead on to the next two steps (i.e. a concordat of communion and full organic union)<sup>47</sup> on the journey toward the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17).

## **8. Future Growing Together in God's Mission**

- 8.1 The Church does not live for itself. It is called into being by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to serve the mission of the triune God in the world. 'The Church belongs to God. It is the creation of God's Word and Holy Spirit. It cannot exist by and for itself.'<sup>48</sup> The mission of God is a single, all-embracing mission which confronts the Church with a range of complementary tasks. Impelled by the joyful duty of giving praise and thanks to God for all the blessings of creation and redemption, the Church seeks to serve God by making known the Good News of salvation and by meeting human need wherever it finds it. In accordance with God's purpose to 'gather up all things in Christ' (Eph. 1:10), the Church is called to embody in an anticipatory way the reconciliation and communion of all people.
- 8.2 The Church knows well that its mission is compromised at every point by its disunity, a disunity which continues at many levels despite the great ecumenical achievements of the twentieth century. How can the Church credibly proclaim the unity of humankind when it is too disunited to recognise a common baptism and to gather around one eucharistic table in the one apostolic faith? We have institutionalised divisions in the Church and come to accept them as normal, forgetting that they are a stumbling-block and a barrier to faith for many. We overlook the fact that they stand in conflict with the will of Christ and amount to a refusal of the unity which is his gift.
- 8.3 The mission of the Church – its service of the mission of God – will be greatly enhanced by the overcoming of historic divisions between the churches. In Australia the removal of barriers between our two churches, whilst not providing an instant or complete solution to the problems and challenges confronting the Church, will be a step of great importance, especially when seen together with other comparable steps being considered by our churches. In many places in rural and regional parts of Australia our churches have small, struggling communities which would benefit greatly from the interchange of ordained ministries, especially if this interchangeability were full and unimpeded. The matter is not less urgent, nor are the advantages less significant, in the establishment of new congregations and mission projects.
- 8.4 The proposals in this agreement have been formulated out of our obedience to the Gospel and the better discharge of our call to mission. Unity is for the sake of mission. Changes in the socio-economic pattern of life in Australia in recent years provide an opportunity to

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<sup>47</sup> See section 1.5.2 above.

<sup>48</sup> *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 181 (Geneva: WCC, 1998), §9.

develop the unity between our two churches. When Christians demonstrate in their lives that the barriers which divide the rest of society do not divide the Church, the Gospel is proclaimed. We may be certain that we are called, together, to grow in mission, the mission of the Church, within the mission of the triune God.

Signed in the name of the Joint Working Group by

The Rt Rev Richard Appleby  
*The Anglican Church of Australia*

The Rev Dr Christiaan Mostert  
*The Uniting Church in Australia*

on the eighteenth day of February 2001

## Appendix 1

### **Documents of Overseas Ecumenical Dialogues and Other Papers studied by the Joint Working Group**

*Apostolicity and Succession.* Church of England House of Bishops Occasional Paper, 1994.

*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.* WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 111, 1982.

*Code of Practice for Local Co-operation in Victoria between the Anglican church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia,* Melbourne, 1999.

*Commitment to Mission and Unity.* Report of the informal conversations between the Methodist Church and the Church of England, 1996.

*The Diaconate as Ecumenical Opportunity.* The Hanover Report of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, 1996.

*Episkopé and Episcopacy and the Quest for Visible Unity.* WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 183, 1999.

*Facing Unity.* Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, 1985.

*God's Reign & Our Unity.* The Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission, 1984.

*The Nature and Purpose of the Church.* WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 181, 1998.

*The Niagara Report.* The Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcopé, 1987.

*On the Way to Visible Unity, A Common Statement on Relations between the Church of England, the Federation of the Evangelical Churches (GDR) and the Evangelical Church in Germany,* Meissen, 1988.

*The Porvoo Common Statement with the Porvoo Agreement,* between the Church of England, the Church of Ireland and the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches of the Baltic States and Scandinavia, 1994-96.

*Sharing in the Apostolic Communion.* Report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission, 1996.

*Towards the Reconciliation of Ministries.* The Church Unity Commission, South Africa, 1996.

## **Appendix 2**

### ***An Agreed Statement on Baptism***

#### **The Institution of Baptism**

We cite and endorse the following statement from *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (par 1, p. 2).

Christian baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and in his resurrection. It is incorporation into Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord; it is entry into the New Covenant between God and God's people. Baptism is a gift of God and is administered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. St Matthew records that the risen Lord, when sending his disciples into the world, commanded them to baptise (Matt. 28:18-20). The universal practice of baptism by the apostolic Church from its earliest days is attested in letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Fathers. The churches today continue this practice as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows his grace upon his people.

#### **The Meaning of Baptism**

Scripture expresses the meaning of baptism in various ways.

- a) Baptism is a participation in Christ's death which opens the way to newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Thus baptism links us not only with Christ's death, but also with his resurrection (Col. 2:12).
- b) The water of baptism, like the waters of Noah's flood, represents the judgement of God through which we are saved (1 Pet. 3:18,21). As the body is washed with water so the heart is cleansed of sin through the judgement of God (Acts 22:16; cf. Hebrews 10:22).
- c) In baptism we are incorporated into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit becomes an active power within us and we become witnesses in the service of the gospel (Acts 19: 1-7).
- d) Baptism is a sign and seal of our common life in Christ. Through baptism Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place (Eph. 4:4-6).

Thus baptism is the sign of new birth to life in Christ. The one baptised is united with him and with his people.

#### **Baptism and the Believer**

- a) It is through the gift of faith that the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is received. Personal commitment which is the outcome of faith is necessary for responsible membership in the body of Christ.
- b) Since baptism is for the forgiveness of sins, those baptised need to live in repentance towards God as well as by faith in Him.
- c) Baptism is administered to those being incorporated into the common life of the body of Christ, whether on personal confession of faith or in infancy on confession of faith by sponsors.

- d) The baptised person needs to grow in understanding of faith and in the personal response to it. It is the responsibility of the congregation to ensure that this growth is properly nurtured and directed.

### **The practice of Baptism**

- a) Baptism has its setting within the life and faith of the Church. At baptism the congregation reaffirms its faith in God, its commitment to Christ, and its dependence on the Spirit, and it pledges itself to witness and service. It is for this reason that baptism is normally celebrated in the setting of the Christian congregation at worship.
- b) Baptism is administered by washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Such a washing may be by immersion, or pouring, in water which flows on the candidate.
- c) Baptism is an unrepeatable act.
- d) In normal circumstances baptism is administered by an ordained minister, who should use an order of service which meets the official requirements of the church concerned.
- e) The following elements should be present in the order of service for baptism:—
- (i) the reading of a passage of Scripture relating to baptism;
  - (ii) the preaching of the Word, expounding the significance of this sacrament of the Gospel;
  - (iii) the acknowledgement of God's initiative in salvation, of his continuing faithfulness, and of our total dependence on his Grace;
  - (iv) prayer for the gift of the Spirit;
  - (v) the renunciation of evil;
  - (vi) profession of faith in Christ by the candidate, or by the parent or sponsors;
  - (vii) profession of faith by the congregation;
  - (viii) the promise (in the case of infants) by the parents or sponsors to instruct the child in the truths and duties of the Christian faith, and to bring the child up to love and obey the Lord within the family of the Church;
  - (ix) prayer for the person baptised;
  - (x) the affirmation that the person baptised now belongs to the Holy Catholic Church and is incorporated into the body of Christ.

### **Responsibilities of the Baptised**

- a) Christ commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all nations. The community of the baptised is sent into the world to bear witness to his redeeming work.
- b) The union with Christ which we share through baptism requires the baptised to seek for unity among all Christians. Our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship (Gal. 3:27-28).
- c) 'Baptism into Christ's death has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realisation of the will of God in all realms of life (Rom. 6:9ff; Gal. 3:27-28; 1 Pet. 2:21-4:6)' *BEM*, par. 10, p. 4).

*This statement was adopted by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia and the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia in 1985.*

## Appendix 3

### *Steps to Unity*

#### ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA GENERAL SYNOD ECUMENICAL STRATEGIES GROUP

#### STEPS TO UNITY

#### AN OUTLINE PROCESS FOR ECUMENICAL CONVERGENCE FROM AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

#### STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT:

The first version of this document was prepared by the General Synod Ecumenical Strategies Group at its first meeting at the Santa Maria Centre, Northcote, Melbourne on 19-20 September 1998. This draft was finalised after the meeting of the Group at the Santa Maria Centre of 15 March 1999.

It is now issued on the authority of the Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia by resolution at its meeting at The Centre, Randwick, Sydney on 18 April 1999.

#### GENERAL SECRETARY

#### 1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 This document seeks to outline a process of ecumenical dialogue and convergence with our various ecumenical partners so as to ensure a harmonious and co-ordinated set of outcomes. It aims to provide an ordered and logical progression to full visible communion by stages. The steps in this process are formulated upon the basis of the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church of Australia and the standing determinations of its General Synod, in accordance with the Lambeth Quadrilateral and resolutions of successive Lambeth Conferences.
- 1.2 It seeks to indicate a sequence of practical steps that may be taken on the basis of the level of doctrinal agreement reached at particular stages of the ecumenical journey. In this way it establishes a series of permissions from an Anglican perspective for co-operative ecumenical initiatives to be taken as and when appropriate levels of agreement in Faith and Order have been achieved.
- 1.3 This church fully recognises that other churches may entertain different views of what is ecumenically possible and be committed to more, or less stringent requirements than those laid out in this document with regard to the achievement of levels of agreement before specific practical action may be taken. These differences may be accommodated within the framework of the process outlined here. Indeed, differences of this kind must be negotiated and resolved in each bilateral conversation. This document simply seeks to outline what **may** happen and **when** it may happen **from an Anglican point of view**. It does not seek to dictate what must happen at any particular point in an ecumenical dialogue.
- 1.4 However, while respect for the interests of another church may entail that a specific practical step may be delayed until a further level of doctrinal agreement has been reached, this document seeks to indicate what cannot be brought forward to a point earlier in the process from an Anglican point of view. In this way it establishes the bottom line, as it were, a minimal set of requirements to guide continuing Anglican involvement in ecumenical dialogue with all partner churches.

## 2. LOCAL INITIATIVES

- 2.1 It is assumed that, in the current climate of ecumenical goodwill, initiatives will increasingly be taken to foster co-operation at a local diocesan and parish level and that this will occur in parallel with more formal conversations established at a national level by the decision of the Standing Committee of General Synod and the authoritative equivalent bodies in partner churches.
- 2.2 Once a degree of unity has been reached at a local level, it may be anticipated that there will be a natural desire to begin to formalise relationships with partner churches by expressing an intention to act together in mission wherever it is possible and appropriate to do so. This may involve the drawing up of a formal document in which partner churches celebrate their mutual recognition of continuity in apostolic faith and ministry. For example: "We recognise in each other's traditions the presence of the Church of Jesus Christ and pledge to work together as much as possible as we grow together in unity."

## 3. INITIAL COVENANTS

- 3.1 When initial covenants are established locally they should be secured on the joint authority of the diocesan Bishop and the relevant President/Moderator/Presbytery/Bishop. A degree of shared *episcopate* may thus be an element at the outset.
- 3.2 Welcome to **occasional eucharistic hospitality** in terms of GS Canon 14 of 1973 enables Anglicans to extend an initial degree of sharing in sacramental worship, when the discipline of the other church permits it. Partner churches need to be made aware from the outset that this is a standing canonical provision of the Anglican Church of Australia, but care needs to be exercised to ensure that members of other churches are not inadvertently encouraged to break the discipline of their own church. For example, a general invitation to holy communion on a special occasion might be expressed in the form "Communicant members of other Christian denominations whose discipline permits are welcome to receive communion on this occasion."

## 4. COVENANT OF CO-OPERATION

- 4.1 Against the background of the degree of consensus that has been reached in recent times in ecumenical dialogues at an international and national level, a **Covenant of Co-operation** may be established on the authority of the local church or diocese. This would involve a public profession of common faith and a solemn written agreement not to teach with antagonism contrary to the doctrine of the other Church (eg. Augsburg Confession or Catholic Faith as expressed in BCP and 39 Articles).
- 4.2 Co-operation may take the form of the development of practical projects for shared use of resources for mission. This may involve, for example, the joint use of buildings or a joint programme of outreach. Projects should be locally endorsed with a joint commissioning by Bishop and President/Moderator/Presbytery/Bishop.
- 4.3 When the discipline of the other Church permits, this level of communion may involve **mutual eucharistic hospitality**. For Anglicans this will in the first instance be in terms of the current General Synod Canon allowing for occasional eucharistic hospitality (GS Canon 14 of 1973) but may also involve encouragement to Anglicans to receive communion in worship services of the other church when they are isolated from Anglican life and worship. It is acknowledged that while some of our ecumenical partners may be able to welcome Anglicans to receive communion in their churches at this stage there will be some for whom this is not yet a possibility. Once again it is important to the process of ecumenical convergence that Anglicans respect the discipline of other churches in this regard.
- 4.4 Mutual eucharistic hospitality may take the form of a commitment of one Church to welcome to communion and to care pastorally for members of the other Church in places where they are a minority and have no regular ordained ministry of their own. A local covenant of co-operation involving an agreement for mutual eucharistic hospitality indicates that eucharistic hospitality will be offered on an extended basis to members of the other Church. Sometimes this may involve alternating the worship services of this Church with those of a partner church, while the congregation remains essentially the same from week to week.
- 4.5 Such arrangements are already in place in many isolated localities to meet extreme pastoral need. However, it is acknowledged that this kind of arrangement is technically speaking

uncanonical, given that the BCP provides that those who receive holy communion in this Church must either be confirmed or 'ready and desirous to be confirmed' and that the Admission to Holy Communion Canon No 14, 1973 of General Synod requires that those who avail themselves of 'occasional eucharistic hospitality' but who 'regularly receive the Holy Communion in this Church over a long period which appears likely to continue indefinitely' should be approached by the priest to regularise their membership status. Legislation of General Synod is thus needed to regularise arrangements with partner churches in which this level of eucharistic hospitality and a continuing commitment to the pastoral care of members of the other church is envisaged.

## 5. STATEMENTS OF AGREEMENT ON ESSENTIALS OF FAITH AND MINISTRY

- 5.1 Generally speaking **Statements of Agreement** on essentials of faith and ministry will be made at a national level, following formal conversations established on the authority of the Standing Committee of General Synod. These statements include statements of substantial agreement and theological convergence on such fundamental topics as: Authority of the Scriptures, Creeds as a sufficient statement of faith, Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, some form of *episcopate* as essential to the life of the Church, and other matters specifically relevant to a particular dialogue.
- 5.2 The Anglican commitment to episcopacy and episcopal ordination is expressed in the Ordinal in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer to which we are constitutionally bound in the Anglican Church of Australia. The Lambeth Quadrilateral speaks of 'the historic episcopate, locally adapted'; by this we understand some form of *episcopate* in ordained ministry, exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways, which expresses the principles both of service and oversight implicit in Jesus' own teaching about servants and shepherds. Anglicans also commend the Lima Statement on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry as a good starting point for conversations about the expression of *episcopate* within the three-fold ordering of bishops, priests, and deacons.
- 5.3 Statements will seek to be consistent with the existing statements of agreement made with all our partners in dialogue to which official synodical endorsement has already been given, so as to foster a continuing cordial dialogue and mutual respect as together we continue to seek the truth in Christ.
- 5.4 **Agreed Statements** produced in bi-lateral dialogues on their own authority should be distributed and posted on the internet for wide discussion in the Church. From time to time they may be received and commended for study by synodical action and/or endorsed by General Synod.

## 6. COVENANT OF ASSOCIATION and INTER-COMMUNION BETWEEN CHURCHES warranting INTERIM EUCHARISTIC SHARING

- 6.1 This level of communion may be established by resolution of General Synod after endorsing a **Declaration of Agreement on Essentials of Faith and Ministry**, which elucidates and affirms the agreed statements produced in the course of dialogue. A **Covenant of Association** would also outline the precise canonical procedure proposed to be followed leading to a Concordat of Communion (eg. the acceptance for an interim period, if this is constitutionally possible in Australia, of the temporary anomaly of ministers not episcopally ordained during an integrating phase as in South India or as proposed in the US Episcopal-Lutheran Concordat).
- 6.2 This synodical action will be taken only after consultation with the ACC and referral to the Primates' Meeting of the Anglican Communion or, at the direction of the Primates' Meeting, referral to the Lambeth Conference (See Resolution IV: 3 of Lambeth Conference of 1998). It would also need to be checked for its canonical validity in terms of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia.
- 6.3 This level of communion is expressed by
- (a) the establishment and encouragement of **mutual eucharistic hospitality** - if this is not already authorised - where pastoral needs exist and when ecumenical occasions make this appropriate;
  - (b) synodical action in which both churches recognise one another as churches in which the Gospel is preached and taught;
  - (c) positive encouragement for the development of common Christian life by such means as:
    - i. eucharistic sharing and joint common celebration of the eucharist

- ii. meetings of Church leaders for regular prayer, reflection and consultation, to foster joint *episcopate*
- iii. mutual invitation of Church leaders, clergy and laity, to synods, with a right to speak;
- iv. common agencies of care, education and outreach where possible;
- v. exploring the possibility of adjusting boundaries to assist local and regional co-operation;
- vi. covenants among Church leaders to collaborate in *episcopate*;
- vii. joint pastoral appointments for special projects;
- viii. joint theological and training courses;
- ix. sharing of information and documents;
- x. joint mission programmes;
- xi. agreed syllabuses for Christian education in schools, joint materials for catechesis and adult study;
- xii. co-operation over liturgical forms, cycles of intercession, lectionaries and homiletic materials;
- xiii. welcoming isolated clergy or diaspora congregations into the life of a larger group
- xiv. interchange of ministers to the extent permitted by canon law;
- xv. twinning (partnership) between congregations and communities;
- xvi. joint programmes of diaconal ministry and reflection on issues of social responsibility;
- xvii. joint retreats and devotional materials  
(See Text of Lambeth Resolution 1988: 4)

## 7. CONCORDAT OF COMMUNION

- 7.1 A **Concordat of Communion** establishes a level of communion of the most full and visible kind possible, though admittedly still flawed and imperfect this side of the Eschaton. Sometimes this level of communion is spoken of as full communion or full visible communion. It involves a commitment to the unimpeded interchange of members and ordained ministries at every level.
- 7.2 The decision to enter into a **Concordat of Communion** is established by resolution of General Synod after adopting a **Declaration of Communion**, expressing the belief that the goal of unity of heart and mind has been reached along with the mutual recognition of ministries including the episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate in which ministers are ordained in a lifelong commitment for the exercise of ministry in personal, collegial and communal ways (cf. BEM, Part III: Forms of the Ordained Ministry, secs. A, B and C).

## 8. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary seeks to articulate working definitions of the meaning of various terms currently in use in ecumenical dialogue with partner churches. Its aim is to reduce semantic confusion and to promote a standard terminology so as to ensure that various members of dialogues use the same word with roughly the same meaning.

8.1 **Communion.** The basic meaning of the word communion or *koinonia* expresses what is held in common, and what holds us in common. Most fundamentally it points us to the Trinitarian life of God and the mutual love and action of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the centre of the communion of the Church of God "is life with the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit. Through the sending of his Son the living God has revealed that love is at the heart of the divine life. Those who abide in love abide in God and God in them; if we, in communion with him, love one another, he abides in us and his love is perfected in us (cf. John 4. 7-21). Through love God communicates his life. He causes those who accept the light of the truth revealed in Christ rather than the darkness of this world to become his children. This is the most profound communion possible for any of his creatures." (ARCIC *The Church as Communion*, London, 1991, para. 15).

Because the communion of the Church is essentially a sharing in the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it is to be understood as an eschatological reality. We do not participate in or experience communion in its perfection as it is in God as God is in God's self; rather, this side of the eschaton our experience of communion is imperfect and we enter into it in ever deepening degree.

- 8.2 **Intercommunion.** This term describes a formal relationship between churches of one communion with a church or churches of another. Baptism establishes a basic communion amongst Christians; those who live and worship in denominational families of Christians may choose to enter into formal relationships which establish varying degrees of communion between them. The result is intercommunion of one degree or another between Churches that have formerly been separated.
- 8.3 **Covenant of agreement or covenant of co-operation.** These terms denote a local agreement, usually between parish churches or the dioceses of a national or regional churches, and local communities of denominational communions and their representatives, generally relating to shared resources, shared ministry, worship and programmes of outreach.
- 8.4 **Sacramental communion.** A degree of communion is shared by all Christians on the basis of their sharing in the one sacrament of baptism. *Communio in sacris*, while not being a term often used in Anglican parlance, signifies a more perfected form of sacramental communion, expressed in the open sharing of holy communion.
- 8.5 **Occasional eucharistic hospitality** is defined in the General Synod Admission to Holy Communion Canon No. 14 of 1973 of the Anglican Church of Australia as the invitation to baptised and communicant members of other churches who profess the Apostolic faith and who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity to participate in and receive the sacrament of the holy communion in this Church on an occasional basis. This level of communion is designed to meet the pastoral need for the provision of unilateral eucharistic hospitality in emergencies or in the absence of the priest or minister of a person's own denomination. There may be other special occasions when it is also appropriate to extend the invitation to holy communion to worshippers who as a general rule belong to another Christian family with which this Church is not yet in full visible communion.
- 8.6 **Mutual eucharistic hospitality.** In circumstances in which this Church enters into an agreement or covenant at a local diocesan level to care pastorally for members of a partner church who are cut off from the ministrations of their own church, or vice versa, provision may be made to allow for eucharistic hospitality. This goes beyond extending occasional eucharistic hospitality to individual members of partner churches. It may involve an initial covenant or agreement with a partner church and encouragement to members of this Church to receive communion in another church.
- 8.7 **Interim eucharistic sharing** goes beyond occasional eucharistic hospitality of the kind that is extended in situations of pastoral need to individuals who may be isolated from the ministrations of their own church or on other special occasions. It also goes beyond local arrangements for mutual eucharistic hospitality and local formal commitments to care pastorally for members of a partner church in situations of extreme pastoral need.

This level of communion usually follows the achievement of a significant level of doctrinal agreement, including agreement about ministry which for Anglicans involved episcopal ministry exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways. This level of eucharistic sharing is interim because the fullness of unity between churches has not yet been achieved.

For example, interim eucharistic sharing is defined by Lambeth 88 Resolution 4. It denotes an invitation of special welcome (in this case to the Churches of the Lutheran World Federation of Churches) to receive Holy Communion on the understanding that the Lutheran Churches would do likewise and that this would occur otherwise than only in situations of extreme pastoral need. It allows for the possibility of "common, joint celebration of the eucharist" requiring that a joint eucharist held in an Anglican Church must have an Anglican president and use an authorised Anglican liturgy, with a Lutheran preaching. The converse is recommended for situations in Lutheran Churches.

This is a level of communion extended not just to individuals who happen to be isolated from the ministration of their own church, but a degree of communion formally agreed upon by partner churches committed to working towards the goal of full visible communion.

- 8.8 **Full visible communion.** This term signifies the highest degree of intercommunion between Churches. This level of communion exists between member Churches of the Anglican Communion and those churches which have formally entered into full visible communion with

them. Full visible communion will normally be achieved after a series of agreed statements and the adoption of a Concordat of Communion.

- 8.9 **Agreed Statement or Statement of Agreement.** Generally speaking an agreed statement will be a statement of a bilateral dialogue, setting out terms of substantial agreement in matters of doctrine or areas of theological convergence where substantial agreement has yet to be achieved.
- 8.10 **Concordat of Communion.** This is established not simply on local initiative but by resolution of General Synod on behalf of the Anglican Church of Australia as a whole. It is the instrument designed to warrant and create full visible communion, or *communio in sacris*.
- 8.11 A **Declaration of Communion** is a formal statement endorsed by resolution of General Synod which declares that substantial agreement or sufficient doctrinal convergence has been achieved in bi-lateral dialogue to warrant a commitment to enter into a Concordat of Communion with a partner church. A Declaration of Communion will express the belief that sufficient unity of heart and mind has been reached to warrant the mutual recognition of ministries including the episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate in which ministers are ordained in a lifelong commitment for the exercise of ministry in personal, collegial and communal ways.
- 8.12 **Concelebration.** In the first instance this term refers to the practice of more than one minister of the same Church or communion celebrating at the same altar at the same time using the same form of eucharistic liturgy. In an ecumenical context, concelebration normally becomes possible only when full visible communion or *communio in sacris* has been achieved.

However, a case may be made for concelebration in the form of a 'common joint celebration' of the eucharist involving ordained ministers from two partner churches in the interim period between the making of a Declaration of Agreement on Essentials of Faith and Ministry and the signing of a Covenant of Association and the entry to full visible communion achieved by a Concordat of Communion. This practice goes beyond the provision for 'interim eucharistic sharing' outlined in section 6 above, and has been recently followed with satisfaction in the context of the convergence of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.