

# ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

## Introduction

This Report summarises the work of the General Synod Ecumenical Relations Commission since 2004 and it includes reports about the progress of both our bilateral dialogues and of our more general ecumenical endeavours.

It is a matter of fact that our ecumenical work cannot be isolated from events taking place in our own Anglican Church of Australia, nor from events in the wider Communion. Whilst there is abundant goodwill amongst our ecumenical partners, well-published controversies in the Anglican Communion have impacted our ecumenical work, particularly in the Dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Church and the international work with the Roman Catholic Church. Many of our ecumenical partners wait to see how the Anglican Communion's instruments of Communion, including the 2008 Lambeth Conference, continue our internal responses.

## Links with the Anglican Communion Office

Our intention is to ensure that our Australian bilateral dialogues with ecumenical partners and our local ecumenical initiatives are congruent with trends and initiatives within the rest of the Anglican Communion. I discussed this matter in mid 2007 with The Reverend Canon Gregory Cameron, the Anglican Communion Deputy Secretary. (His role encompasses much more than the ecumenical and interfaith agenda. Currently he is also working on matters related to the Windsor Report and preparations for the Lambeth Conference.) His view, as ours, is that we must keep focus on the goal of the full, visible unity of the Church. The various bilateral dialogues provide the skeleton for this, with local co-operative initiatives putting flesh on the skeleton.

We discussed progress around the Communion concerning Anglican-Lutheran relations, noting that in places like Australia these agreements tend to affect small geographic areas. He noted a new initiative between Anglican and Baptists, which has no equivalence in Australia. Regarding Anglicans and Roman Catholics, he gave me a copy of the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) Report with its Anglican commentary, noting that a Roman Catholic commentary is expected in July 2007.

I conveyed that GSERC and the Roman Catholic Bishops Committee, chaired by Bishop Michael Pultney will be meeting on IARCCUM in September, prior to our General Synod.

Canon Gregory doesn't expect there will be a resumption of the Oriental Orthodox dialogue until after the Lambeth Conference in 2008 and any clarification it may bring ecumenical partners about the Anglican Communion's resolution of recent controversies. We also discussed the excellent recent Anglican-Orthodox statement entitled *The Church of Triune God*, a member of which is the Revd Dr Duncan Reid which will be a source for Bishops' pre-Lambeth reading.

I followed up on a request from Rev. Dr. Robert Gribben (UCA Melbourne) and ascertained that the next discussion between the Church of England and Methodists is proposed for October in London. We discussed briefly the fact that intra-Anglican Covenanting documents may have their own value as a framework for bilateral dialogues with ecumenical partners.

Canon Gregory Cameron would be open to visiting Australia to speak about ecumenical and other Anglican Communion matters.

## NIFCON

I also met with Dr Clare Amos and Dr Susanne Mitchell regarding NIFCON – the Network for Interfaith Concerns for the Anglican Communion. Whilst outside the portfolio of the GSERC,

this fruitful discussion focused on the initiatives being taken regarding Christian-Muslim relations.

As was evident at the World Council of Churches (WCC), ecumenical and interfaith relations are often linked in the portfolios of both ecumenical officers and church agencies. It is the same process of dialogue: to elaborate a framework within which there can be local initiatives. As in Australia, Governments are offering some funding for initiatives which help ensure the dynamic of religion is a positive force in social cohesion. Our conversation focused on the recent NIFCON consultation in Nigeria. I was given a draft of a document on the Theology of Interfaith Relations. This is being produced for a session on this subject, proposed for the Lambeth Conference.

### **Christian-Muslim Forum**

I also met with Dr Julian Bond, Executive Director of the Christian-Muslim Forum. The Forum was established by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Muslim community asked him to appoint the Forum's Board of which he is President. It has been established with significant Government funding, as well as support from Benevolent Foundations. A number of impressive events have been organised and helpful documents produced. The Christian-Muslim forum would seem a model we could adopt in Australia.

The UK Forum is open to linkages with any equivalent body or bodies in Australia. The context for these initiatives continues to be shaped, if not overwhelmed by, the fear and reality of terrorism.

We must continue do what we can to build relations with people of goodwill. Perhaps we may help prevent some individuals turning to terrorism. It is my experience that out of such largely preventative work, one's own Christian faith is illuminated and strengthened. It is also my experience that surprising new friendships can develop with people of other faiths.

As regards the ecumenical agenda, striving to dialogue with Muslims in the current environment, puts many other issues that divide Christians in a very different light. The endeavour gives fresh urgency to our quest for the full, visible unity of the Body of Christ. The same is true as regards those habits and issues which make our unity weak as the Anglican Church of Australia.

### **World Council of Churches (WCC) – Ecumenical Officers Network**

As Ecumenical Officer I have been attending meetings of the Ecumenical Officers of the World Council of Churches. The Ecumenical Officers met again in Geneva at the WCC May 6-10, 2007. The purpose of these meetings has been evolving during the period I have been Ecumenical Officer for our Church. This was the third I have attended. The network of Ecumenical Officers has been in existence through much of the WCC's history. With all the changes taking place at the WCC the Network has been re-invigorated. The particular foci are improving relations between member Churches, and improving communication between WCC staff and member Churches, concerning agreed projects and programs.

The number of members attending grows with each meeting, but is still only around 60 of the possible 248 WCC members. There was little representation this time from either the Caribbean or Pacific Region. The Rev Dr Sandy Yule (UCA) and I attended from Australia. Other Asian representatives were from Malaysia, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines. Other Anglican representatives were from Nigeria, Scotland, the US, Brazil, Kenya. Some are full-time Ecumenical/Interfaith Officers, like the Bishop from ECUSA. Others, like me, do this work in relation to another full-time position.

At this meeting, I gave a presentation on the first day. Subsequently, I was asked to be a member of the Conference Steering Committee. I drafted the document for the Final Plenary session and organised the closing worship. Somewhat to my own surprise, I find myself as one who is now a custodian of what might be called the "ecumenical spirit." This is an evolving

rather than static matter but does include a continuing desire to pursue the full, visible unity of the Church; a readiness to learn from others, a collegial openness to what the Spirit is saying to Church globally and locally. I have come to feel much more affectionate towards the venture which is the WCC, especially in these days when there is less money and triumphalism, more readiness to build partnerships with member Churches.

The Ecumenical Officers received the WCC Document Programme Plans 2008-2013, with project outlines for 2008-2010. Detailed descriptions of projects and activities including budgets, should now be available on [www.ecuspace.net](http://www.ecuspace.net). This Programme seeks to implement the resolutions of the WCC Assembly 2006. The GSERC meeting after General Synod will need to consider how we can contribute to and help implement this important Programme.

A session with the General Secretary of the WCC, The Revd Sam Kobia, included his encouragement of the Ecumenical Officers' role in helping the Programme be delivered by and with member churches.

He certainly hopes this network will continue to expand, incorporating more members from Churches of the South. Rev. Sam wants the network to continue its meetings. Whilst all this very encouraging (and understandable given the constrained WCC budget and its greater need of member churches co-operation with the Programme), it is still to be seen what it may mean in practice.

The Ecumenical Officers also met with the new Youth Body, formed after the last WCC Assembly. Once that body clarifies its first initiatives, we will be asked for support and encouragement.

It is hard to see the Ecumenical Relations Commission or myself as Ecumenical Officer, doing much more with the program agenda other than helping with communication in both directions.

One day of our meeting was at Bossey, the Ecumenical Institute, near Geneva. Its graduate and post-graduate programs are fully subscribed, attracting gifted scholars. Bossey's role in ecumenical formation is well established. Our Australian Anglican Church has not used Bossey as well as we might for clergy's long service leave, as well as for our ordinands and theologians. There are a range of scholarships available to assist people study at Bossey.

Our meeting had presentations from a number of WCC Program Directors, including: Worship and Spirituality; ACT Development; the Decade for Overcoming Violence and as regards a WCC international Peace Conference June 17-21, 2007 in Amman, Jordan: "Churches Together Looking for Peace and Justice in the Middle East".

The WCC Ecumenical Officers will meet again in 18 months. It is an important network and complements our bilateral work with other Churches.

### **The National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA)**

In the Australian context, this WCC network sits within our participation in the NCCA. Since the last General Synod, we have been represented on the NCCA Executive by the Primate (with myself as alternate) and Ms Margaret Rodgers. In 2007, Ms. Rodgers retired from the Executive after many years of significant service. I have replaced her and the General Secretary is the Primate's alternate. The NCCA is now ably Chaired by Bishop Richard Appleby. The particular focus of 2007 is the NCCA Forum held in July.

### **Ecumenical Formation**

Reports of the Commission to the General Synod Standing Committee have included comment on our intentional work to assist the ecumenical formation of young Anglicans. My last report to the General Synod noted the need for this, given that many of our ecumenical leaders had been formed in the post War II era, as a response to the appalling effects of sectarian rivalry on our proclamation of the Gospel in Australia. As noted many times, it is hard for people to hear the Gospel when it is voiced by people who seem divided amongst themselves.

In 2006, the GSERC organized a specific program of ecumenical formation for young Anglicans. Diocesan Bishops were encouraged to send young Anglicans to the program, held in Melbourne to coincide with both the "Make Poverty History" campaign and the related visit to Australia by the Archbishop of Cape Town. A fine group of young Anglicans gathered. Ms Alison Preston, a member of the Commission, worked very hard to make this a success. It is important and intended that there be follow-up events to ensure a next generation of Anglican ecumenical leaders, clergy and lay.

### **Δ Concluding Note:**

luctory comments conveyed that the various bilateral dialogues and other formed ecumenical conversations provide a framework for local co-operative initiatives.

We see fruitful co-operations between Christians in areas ranging from theological studies, social welfare policy and practice, overseas development, contemplative prayer and meditation, spiritual direction; the intersection of the arts and the Gospel, and much more. Elatedly, through such co-operation friendships shape and our common discipleship of Jesus is illuminated.

Seen in this light, there is a depth and a quality to ecumenical relations for which we give thanks and praise to God.

Members of the General Synod Ecumenical Relations commission are very aware that what we can contribute is limited by time and resources. There is much more we would like to do, so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings hope to a confused and divided world.

As Chair, may I convey my appreciation to those who have served on the Commission since the last General Synod.

### **Members of the GSERC have been:**

Bishop Philip Huggins (Chair)  
Rev. Dr. Erica Mathieson,  
Ms Alison Preston,  
Ms. Margaret Rodgers,  
Bishop Richard Appleby (now retired);  
Bishop John Stewart (now retired);  
The Ven Dr. David Powys;  
The Revd. Dr. Duncan Reid,  
The Revd. Canon Bruce McAteer;  
Bishop Graeme Rutherford;  
Archbishop Philip Freier.

**Bishop Philip Huggins**  
**Chair, Ecumenical Relations Commission**

June 2007

## **World Council Of Churches (WCC)**

The World Council of Churches 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February 2006. The Australian Anglican delegates were:

Bishop Philip Huggins  
The Revd Canon Bruce McAteer  
Ms Alison Preston – Youth delegate  
Ms Rose Elu – Indigenous delegate  
Bishop Philip Freier – Advisor to the delegation

Ms Alison Preston was subsequently elected to the WCC Central Committee. The following is a report of her involvement and activities with the WCC.

### **WCC Central Committee, Geneva, September 2006**

#### **Summary**

The clearest themes emerging from the 2006 Central Committee meeting were commitments to inter-faith relations, in particular Christian-Muslim engagement, and in addressing extreme poverty and related issues.

The WCC is undertaking a process of significant and necessary internal change. All CC members were provided with a copy of Dr Kobia's recently published paper: *Called to the One Hope: a new Ecumenical Epoch*. In this paper I was encouraged by Dr Kobia's reference to the Micah Challenge as an example of the changing global ecumenical environment. Dr Kobia notes that:

*"The Micah Challenge is not connected with the WCC, yet brings together more than 260 Christian organisations and the World Evangelical Fellowship, which has three million local churches in 111 countries. I use this example to illustrate our need for change. The future of the ecumenical movement is being challenged and overtaken – it is not eternal – by a radically redrawn map of Christianity. New configurations of the faith community will require a re-conceptualisation of relationships so that in the future a Micah Challenge can be part of a new inclusive ecumenism, rather than being outside a protective institutionalism."*

Dr Kobia is clearly trying to usher in a new era. The vast majority of senior positions were declared open, and new executives have been appointed. The quality, experience, and approach of staff recruited over the next few years will be critical in shaping whether this change helps the WCC become more relevant as a global body for Christian unity and action.

I was disappointed to see a lack of tangible, committed action to engage with Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. That said, Dr Kobia's response to the challenge to find new ecumenical ways of working appears to be focused on the Global Christian Forum (GCF) and relationships with other Christian World Communions. See more information about the GCF later in the report.

#### **Report of the General Secretary**

Dr Sam Kobia opened his report with a strong focus on conflict in the Middle East, stating that promoting peace in the region through programs, advocacy, and solidarity would be a priority for the WCC over the next seven years. Dr Kobia proposed that a Palestine/Israel Ecumenical forum be established to coordinate ecumenical advocacy initiatives. He also called for churches to increase their efforts to send volunteers on the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

Migration was noted as having decisive consequences for the ecumenical movement, locally and globally - one in fifty people on earth are living outside their home countries. The experiences of Christians in diaspora continue to modify the theology and worship of both "host" and "guest" churches and church institutions, and all Christians have been challenged and called to "welcome the stranger". Dr Kobia proposed regional hearings and a major consultation in 2008 on "migration and the changing ecclesial landscape".

### **Restructuring the WCC**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly instructed the General Secretary to "implement clear and consistent changes to the working style, organisational structure, and staff of the WCC necessary to meet the current and future challenges to the ecumenical movement." Key issues include a marked lack of internal collaboration and consultation between WCC departments, and the considerable number of staff who have been employed by the WCC in Geneva for more than 20 years, and who are on permanent contracts.

Dr Kobia has announced a major restructure, with all management positions declared open. Several voluntary redundancies or retirements had been announced. Significant uncertainty was evident among staff. The Central Committee approved a policy recommending that all new staff contracted to the WCC be limited to seven years of service, other than under exceptional circumstances. The impact of these changes in terms of genuinely changing the working culture of the WCC are unlikely to be evident before 2008.

### **Finances**

I am a member of the Finance Committee. In August 2006 WCC finances were stable at CHF24 million (Aus\$23.3 million) per year, with 75% of members churches paying fees in 2005, compared with 55% in 1999. The general reserves target of CHF 9 million (Aus\$8.7 million) will be met in 2007.

A significant income strategy has been developed for 2006 – 2008, with a new development manager and a US-based fundraiser recruited to undertake this. Initial focus will be on increasing income from US-based member churches, and from foundations to fund projects such as the Decade to Overcome Violence.

### **WCC Programs for next 7 years**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly instructed the WCC to "do less, do it well, and in an integrated, collaborative, and integrated approach". There will be a focus on six programs, with fewer projects and stronger emphasis on monitoring and evaluation:

- WCC and the ecumenical Movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Unity, Mission and Spirituality
- Public Witness: Addressing Power, Affirming Peace
- Justice and Diakonia
- Ecumenical and Faith Formation
- Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation

Communication will receive renewed priority in the coming period, as the WCC reinforces efforts to raise its own profile and to influence the international agenda. Some Central Committee members were concerned that previously run programs have simply been re-organised and renamed to suit a more integrated structure.

## Global Issues

Lebanon's minister of culture, Dr Tarek Mitri, addressed the WCC Central Committee. He thanked the WCC for the expressions of solidarity following Israel's attacks on Lebanon in July/August 2006. He also challenged the WCC to express solidarity not only through humanitarian relief but also in terms of putting pressure on governments to revive the peace process in the region.

Major public issues on which the committee agreed action were:

- The war in **Lebanon** and **northern Israel**: central committee called for a sustainable and unconditional ceasefire and lifting the blockade of Lebanon
- **Children in conflicts**, with focus on Northern Uganda: expressed concern at the threat to international peace and security and impediments to the provision of humanitarian emergency aid as a result of the ongoing conflict;
- **Just trade**: called on churches to encourage their governments to continue working for a new multilateral trade mechanism, with a new set of multilateral trade rules which are just and democratic;
- A compassionate response to **HIV and AIDS**: called for universal access to treatment, care and support, and encouraged churches to continue to play a critical role in overcoming the pandemic and to welcome persons living with HIV and AIDS;
- **Extra-judicial killings in the Philippines**: called on the government of the Philippines to disband "death squads", private militias and paramilitary forces and instruct the military to cease listing churches and church workers as "enemies of the state";
- Conflict in **Sri Lanka**: called on the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to put an immediate end to all hostilities and resume peace negotiations;
- **Sudan**: requested that the viability of arranging a high-level delegation made up of church representatives and members of the Islamic community to visit and meet with government officials in Sudan as well as representatives of the Darfur region be considered;
- **Kosovo**: encouraged religious leaders of Kosovo to continue to work for reconciliation

In 2006, WCC also:

- supported morally responsible investment (and morally responsible dis-investment) in Israel-Palestine, as outlined by the Presbyterian Church in the USA;
- appealed to the USA to reconfirm the 1995 pledge never to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapon state signatory to the non-proliferation treaty; and
- supported the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the Human Rights Council.

## Youth Body

A "Youth Body" of 25 young people (18 – 30 years) was approved, with the aim to ensure the sustainable and active involvement of young adults in all levels of the WCC, and to broaden participation from diverse ecumenical networks. The Youth Body will meet at least 4 times between 2006 and the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

### **Australians elected to WCC Commissions:**

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (includes Peace, Justice and Diakonia)	Rev Elenie Poulos, UCA (Sydney)
Commission on Ecumenical and Faith Formation	Miss Aimee Kent, UCA (Wagga - under 30)
Commission on World Mission & Evangelism	The Churches of Christ nomination was not successful

### **The Global Christian Forum – Kenya, November 6 – 9th 2007**

[www.globalchristianforum.net](http://www.globalchristianforum.net)

The Global Christian Forum will gather in Limuru, Kenya, about 25 kms north-west from the city of Nairobi. The WCC will be represented at this Forum, and is encouraging this Forum as a means of finding new ecumenical ways of working and development relationships.

Just prior to the Forum, the International Council and Leadership Team of the World Evangelical Alliance will hold its annual meeting at the same venue. The Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions will meet immediately afterwards in Nairobi. These arrangements have been made so that the members of these two bodies will be able to participate in the Forum.

#### **Forum Program**

Meeting under the theme *Our Journey with Jesus Christ, the Reconciler*, the four-day event will begin with an introduction to the history and purpose of the Global Christian Forum and an intensive round of sharing among the participants of their faith journeys and faith communities. Because of the size of the gathering this will be done in groups, followed by feedback in plenary. The second and third days will focus on two sub-themes: Sharing our discernment of what God is doing in our Churches and Organizations and Sharing our discernment of our place in God's mission in the world .

#### **Speakers**

Three speakers will address the key issues. Dr Cheryl Bridges Johns, Professor of Discipleship and Christian Formation at the Theological Seminary of the Church of God (Cleveland, USA), will speak on new and emerging trends in Christianity. Dr Wonsuk Ma, Executive Director of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, will address the question of discerning what God is doing in the churches and church-related organizations today, and Dr Lamin Sanneh, Professor of World Christianity & History at Yale Divinity School, will speak about discernment as it relates to the place of the churches and organizations in God's mission in the world.

#### **Participants**

The Forum will bring together some 240 leaders from the wide diversity of the Body of Christ and all the regions of the world. About half of these will come from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and para-church organizations, including African Instituted churches. They will be joined by representatives of the Anglican and Protestant church families (over sixty participants), the Orthodox churches (some twenty-five), regional bishops' conferences of the Catholic Church (about twenty) and international Christian organizations. To date, over one hundred have already confirmed their participation. It will be the first gathering ever of such a broad representation of all the main Christian traditions in the world.



## **International Church Action for Peace in Israel & Palestine, June 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> 2007**

The WCC facilitated a global week of prayer and action for peace in Palestine and Israel in the first week of June, marking 40 years of illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. Churches and church agencies in more than 10 countries were actively involved in coordinating the week. In Australia this included services in Brisbane, Sydney and Adelaide, and a peace walk in Canberra.

The Jerusalem Heads of Churches met together to review and endorse a moving liturgy for use by Christians around the world, seeking a just peace in the Holy Land. This liturgy is useful beyond the ICAPPI week, and is available from Alison Preston [apreston@anglicord.org.au](mailto:apreston@anglicord.org.au)

## **ACT International & ACT Development**

Action by Churches Together (ACT) International is a global alliance of more than 100 churches and related agencies working to save lives and support communities in emergencies worldwide. In 2005, ACT International raised US\$122 million for humanitarian assistance in 39 countries. A number of Australian church-based agencies are members of ACT, including *AngliCORD*, Anglican Board of Mission, Church World Service, and the Australian Lutheran World Service.

Action by Churches Together (ACT) Development is a global alliance of churches and related agencies working to promote community development and influence development policy worldwide. Significant discussions about a merger between the two alliances are well underway, with a Memorandum of Understanding currently in operation. A successful merger will position ACT International as one of the most significant emergency relief and development alliances worldwide.

**Alison Preston**

31 May 2007

## **AUSTARC – Australian Anglican/Roman Catholic Conversation**

AustARC meets twice a year. Since the last General Synod, AustARC's main preoccupation has been the production of a short study on the necessity and nature of the Church – *'Why the Church?'* The resulting study is expected to be available to General Synod members.

### **Resignations and appointments**

The Roman Catholic co-chair, Bishop David Walker, Bishop of Broken Bay, has recently resigned and Dr Richard Lennan, a member since the inception of AustARC, has also resigned to take up a university post in the USA. Both have a keen interest in Anglican/Roman Catholic relations and have made significant contributions to the work of AustARC. Bishop Christopher Prowse, auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, has been appointed by the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference, as the new co-chair and Fr Greg Brett CM, the Academic Dean of Yarra Theological Union, will replace Dr Lennan.

The current Anglican membership is:

Bishop Graeme Rutherford (co-chair);

Archdeacon Philip Newman;

The Revd Dr John Davis;

Bishop Philip Huggins;

Dr Heather Thomson;

The Revd Rhys Bezzant.

### **The future**

AustARC now stands at a cross-road in regard to the future. The role of IARCCUM has assumed an important role in the future relation between our two churches and consideration will need to be given as to where AustARC can best contribute to the work of bringing our two churches closer together. At the time of reporting, this conversation is still going on.

**Bishop Graeme Rutherford**  
Anglican Co-Chair

## **Anglican-Lutheran Consultation in Australia**

The reception of the document *Common Ground* was a major achievement for the Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue when, after nearly thirty years of dialogue it was finally agreed to by both national Synod bodies of our respective churches.

The Thirteenth session of the Anglican General Synod meeting in 2004 adopted the text of the Covenant in Resolution 78/04 which said in part:

### **OUR UNITY IN CHRIST**

- God has reconciled us to himself in Christ. We have been joined to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, and have been reconciled to God in one body through the cross. We already share the one baptism and participate together in the unity of the Spirit.
- With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, we desire to manifest and maintain together, in the bond of peace, this unity which has been given to us in Christ.

### **OUR COVENANT**

- We recognise each other as churches that, despite our failings, stand in the continuity of apostolic faith and ministry. We acknowledge that in each other's ordained ministries gospel oversight and administration of the means of grace are authentic and effective. We pledge to work together to develop joint participation in mission and witness, and to continue to seek ways of manifesting the unity that is ours in Christ.
- We believe that the agreement in faith and order we have reached is sufficient basis for regional agreements for eucharistic hospitality and recognition of ministry. Under this covenant each church may invite and welcome the members of the other church in a particular locality to share in Holy Communion and to receive pastoral care according to need.

### **GROWING TOGETHER**

- We undertake to continue to work together towards a Concordat for full communion and reconciliation of ministries, with full eucharistic sharing and interchangeability of members and ordained ministries Australia-wide.
- Together we make our prayer that, being rooted and grounded in love, we may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

This same resolution also invited the House of Bishops to appoint a joint Anglican/Lutheran Consultation to:

- (i) prepare national guidelines for eucharistic sharing,
- (ii) monitor local cooperation between Anglicans and Lutherans
- (iii) continue to explore the outstanding areas of difference in doctrine and practice, particularly with regard to episcopal and diaconal ministry, initiation and Church membership, and relationships with other Churches,
- (iv) consider any other matters or discharge any other tasks agreed by the House of Bishops/College of Presidents, and
- (v) prepare, in due course, for a Concordat as envisaged in paragraph 5.1 of *Common Ground*.

We believe that we are now partners in consulting together about how best we might implement some of the recommendations of *Common Ground* and as we continue to move forward in our common mission and ministry.

The Consultation has recently produced an agreed set of Guidelines and a pro-forma Document of Local Agreement to enable rural and regional churches to practise sustained Eucharistic hospitality and shared pastoral ministry, in those places where two separate congregations are no longer viable or where common action better serves the mission of Christ. These two documents have been authorised by the College of Presidents of the Lutheran Church in Australia and by the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church in Australia.

The major focus of our discussions at present is the nature and place of Episcopal and diaconal ministries within the Church. We have also contributed to the tripartite discussions between Anglican, Uniting Church and Lutheran Dialogue partners.

At the end of 2006 the Rev'd Dr Duncan Reid and the Rev'd Dr Peter Treloar both left the Dialogue group. Dr Reid has been replaced by the Rt Rev'd Dr Stephen Pickard, Assistant Bishop of Adelaide. In order to maintain equal representation on the Dialogue, Dr Treloar will not be replaced. The last meeting in 2006 was also the final meeting for the Rev'd Dr Vic Pfitzner, who has served as a Lutheran member of the Dialogue, and then of the Consultation, for nearly thirty years.

In 2006, The Ven Dr Cathy Thomson represented the Anglican Communion as a member of the Anglican Lutheran International Commission, meeting in Tanzania. She again represented this Church at the meeting of the same Commission in Nova Scotia, Canada in May 2007. We have been pleased to have, through her, a voice in the ongoing discussions between Anglicans and Lutherans around the world.

**Bishop Garry Weatherill**  
**Co-Chair of the Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue in Australia.**

31 May 2007

## Anglican/Uniting Church Dialogue

In mid 2006, following a two year hiatus in the formal Anglican/Uniting Dialogue, a largely new, Victoria-based Anglican team was assembled, with Archdeacon David Powys as co-chair. There had in the meantime been continuing discussion about Anglican/Uniting dialogue issues and processes at the level of our Ecumenical Relations Commission, with a number of visits to meetings of the Commission by invited Uniting Church representatives.

The reception by General Synod in 2001 of the Anglican/Uniting Dialogue Group report *For the Sake of the Gospel* was a significant moment in dialogue between these two churches. In receiving that report General Synod also referred it to the Doctrine Panel and resolved to explore a formal Covenant of Association with the Uniting Church in Australia.

A paper prepared soon afterwards by way of response on behalf of the Doctrine Commission by the then Primate and Chair of that Commission occasioned considerable surprise. The paper was instrumental in prompting trilateral discussions, at the request of the Uniting Church, involving representatives of the three bilateral dialogues which involve the Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Churches. Formal trilateral meetings were held on three occasions in 2006, seeking mutual clarification of two questions:

*What is the relationship of church to ordained ministry? and*

*What steps need to be taken in each of our churches to adapt our present exercise of episcopate in its various forms to make full eucharistic fellowship possible?*

Each church participating in the trilateral meeting was asked to consider certain questions. Those asked of the Anglican Church were:

1. Given that the Lutheran Church in Australia (LCA) and the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) do not have an episcopate as such, although the LCA's office of president does function episcopally, what would it take for the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) to recognise the ministry of these churches?
2. Given that the office of president in the LCA is essentially no different from the office of pastor except in its location and scope, and that whatever differences do exist between them in the area of *episcopé* are by human arrangement rather than by divine mandate, can the ACA recognise a ministry such as the LCA's whose order is primarily presbyteral rather than episcopal, even though its presidents have some episcopal functions?
3. If the LCA decided to call its presidents bishops, what else would it take for the ACA to recognise the validity of these bishops?

A second development was the opinion provided by the General Synod Church Law Commission (2004-020) in response to an earlier reference from the Standing Committee asking:

*Is Episcopal ordination necessary from a constitutional and canonical point of view for the Anglican Church of Australia, such that it should be a non-negotiable part of any agreement with the Uniting Church of Australia and secondly in relation to what areas of ministerial activity would that restriction be relevant?*

The Church Law Commission indicated that there would need to be an amendment to, or suspension of, section 4 of the Constitution “to provide for the receiving, as deacons or priests in the Anglican Church, of ministers of the Uniting Church of Australia who were non-episcopally ordained.” It is recognized that this would only be possible with very substantial support within General Synod.

The first formal meeting of the reconvened Anglican/Uniting Dialogue Group did not occur until 23 - 24 February 2007 in Camberwell Victoria. With many new members, and after a five year hiatus, this meeting necessarily involved clarification and consolidation rather than fresh progress.

A second meeting of the Dialogue has been set for 31 August – 1 September this year in Parkville Victoria.

In the ongoing dialogue it is clear that the focus needs to be on working towards achieving an interchangeability of ministers. This is a pressing matter in regions where such provision is a matter of pastoral necessity in order for the ministry of either church to be sustained. The role of the Presbytery in ordination in the Uniting Church is a significant contextual factor in this discussion. At the theological level it is recognized that more work needs to be done on our mutual understanding of ordination and *episcopé*.

The members of the Anglican delegation are

The Ven Dr David Powys (Melbourne, ACA co-chair)  
The Rev’d Tim Gibson (Melbourne),  
The Ven Philip Muston (Gippsland),  
Canon Dr Colleen O’Reilly (Melbourne),  
The Rt Rev’d Dr Stephen Pickard (Adelaide).

The Uniting Church delegation is comprised of

Professor Chris Mostert (UCA co-chair),  
Professor Robert Gribben,  
The Rev’d Dr Graham Perry,  
The Rev’d Pam White and  
Mrs Janet Wood

It may be anticipated that the Dialogue will continue forward candidly, courteously and conscientiously.

**David Powys**  
**Anglican Co-chair**

## **Australian Anglican Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum**

The Anglican Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum was formed by Standing Committee of General Synod in February 1991. The formal membership of the Forum comprised:

Bishop John Stewart (Co-Chair – retired 2007),  
Archdeacon Philip Newman,  
Canon Jim Brady and  
the Revd Dr Colin Holden (until 2005).

These members were appointed to meet with four members of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, representing the Coptic, Armenian, Syrian, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. When the Forum has met both the Anglican membership and Oriental Orthodox membership have been augmented by invited observers with expertise in the area under discussion.

Since 2004 the Australian Anglican Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum, although continuing to remain in existence, has been in suspension. Following the controversy which has emerged in the Anglican Communion regarding homosexuality, meetings of the International Anglican Oriental Orthodox Commission have been suspended at the request of the Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs. As the Australian Forum is dependent on the International Commission for its identity and purpose, the suspension has flowed through to our work here in Australia. Consequently there has not been a meeting of the Australian Forum in 2005 or 2006.

However, over the years a warm friendship has developed in Australia between Anglican members of the Forum and the leaders of the Armenian, Coptic and Syrian Orthodox Churches such that we have been able to maintain informal contact. The possibility of an unofficial and informal meeting with Archbishop Baliozian of the Armenian Church, Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Church and Archbishop Malki of the Syrian Church to hear their comments on the ARCIC Document on Mary is currently under consideration. One of the aims of the Forum over the years has been to foster understanding between our Churches and deepen our fellowship in the Gospel, and the continuation of our friendship despite the suspension of the International Commission meetings is a welcome indication that the work of the Australian Forum has been fruitful.

Following the signing of the Draft Agreement on Christology between the Anglican and Oriental Orthodox Churches in November 2002, the Anglican Consultative Council has requested each Province to study the document and provide a response to the ACC with a view to the Agreement receiving formal ratification at the 2008 Lambeth Conference. Standing Committee referred the Agreement to the Doctrine Commission who, after consultation with the Chair of the Regional Forum, provided a Report for Standing Committee. Standing Committee received the Report and it has now been forwarded to the ACC.

The Australian response welcomed the Christological Agreement but recommended elucidation of an ambiguous clause and questioned the appropriateness of negative comment on another Church in an Agreement between the Anglican and Oriental Orthodox Churches. It is understood that similar concerns have been expressed in the US, Canada and the UK and it seems likely therefore that the ACC will recommend that the International Commission be reconvened before the Lambeth Conference to attend to the responses from the Anglican Communion. The Australian Bishops should be aware of the concerns of the Doctrine Commission and the Doctrine Commission's request for further elucidation as they consider the motion that will be put to the Lambeth Conference that the Christological Agreement be accepted.

After sixteen years as Co-Chair of the Australian Anglican Oriental Orthodox Forum and as I have now retired, this is an appropriate time for me to step down as Co-Chair of the Forum. I have recommended to the Primate that, although the Forum is currently in recess, Standing Committee should appoint a successor and that they should consider a Bishop who would be able to report to the Australian Bishops Conference, and to represent the Forum in General Synod, and particularly at the Lambeth Conference. The Oriental Orthodox members of the International Commission and the Australian Forum, are almost all Bishops and although our Anglican membership is normally more balanced it is clear that at this stage of our Conversations, the Oriental Orthodox leadership is more comfortable in relating to a Chairman who is a Bishop.

With the work of the Forum currently suspended and the likelihood that it may take some time to resolve the matters in the Anglican Communion which led to this, it is recommended that the Forum remain as constituted, and where possible, continue to foster cordial relations between our two families. There was sadness here in Australia when our formal Conversations ceased and both the Anglican and the Oriental Orthodox Churches share the hope that one day they may be resumed.

**Bishop John Stewart**  
**Co-Chair of Australian Anglican Oriental Orthodox Forum**

27 March 2007