

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

1. MEMBERSHIP SINCE LAST GENERAL SYNOD

Bishop Philip Huggins (Chair)

Archbishop Roger Herft, Archbishop Philip Freier, Bishop Stephen Pickard, Bishop Douglas Stevens, Bishop Gary Wetherill, Revd Dr Erica Mathieson, Ven Dr David Powys, Revd Dr Richard Treloar, Ms Alison Preston, Deaconess Margaret Rodgers; Ven Philip Newman, Revd Dr Duncan Reid.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The General Synod Ecumenical Relations Commission (GSERC) was formed, prior to the Brisbane General Synod of 2001. The essential functions of the Commission are to ensure consistency in bilateral dialogues with other denominations and, to promote the ecumenical endeavours of our Anglican Church of Australia.

2.2 It will be appreciated that the various Christian denominations share many things with us as Word and Spirit intersect in proclamation:

- Holy men and women are following Jesus in every denomination.
- The good news of God in Christ is proclaimed and witnessed with costly faithfulness.
- Jesus is known in the breaking of the bread.
- He says 'do this in remembrance of me', and all do.
- The two Great Commandments, in the Spirit of Jesus, inspire radical love of God and neighbours in other denominations, as in ours.
- Each denomination also has its own challenges and disappointments, just as we do in the Anglican Church of Australia.

2.3 The unresolved internal issues of our denominations have impacted on what is possible between us in terms of more vivid organic unity. This has certainly been true in the period since the last General Synod. Our internal Anglican Communion issues have seen some constraints in other's dialogue with us. We have been more constrained with others too because of their internal issues.

This is unlikely to change in the short-term.

Accordingly, we keep focusing on what we hold in common and can do in common, including through local ecumenical bodies, through the National Council of Churches of Australia, and the World Council of Churches.

2.4 At the same time, we seek to clarify, through bilateral dialogue, our relationship with other denominations. We celebrate our achievements and keep working at differences.

This is evident in the Summary reports which follow on our various bilateral dialogues.

At this General Synod we will give particular attention to the fruits of work with the Uniting Church of Australia over recent years.

Also incorporated are the Reports from our members on World Council of Churches bodies.

- 2.5 We trust these Reports give members of General Synod better appreciation of our continuing ecumenical ventures.

As Chair, may I convey our Church's gratitude to all who contribute their expertise to our Ecumenical Relations.

3. REPORTS

3.1 ANGLICAN - ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE (Archbishop Roger Herft)

The Anglican Orthodox Dialogue plays a vital role in the international ecumenical engagement. The publication of *The Church of the Triune God* has provided the Church universal and local with a deeper understanding of the Church as a living witness to the Divine life as revealed in the Holy and Blessed Trinity.

The meeting in Crete from 14-21 September 2009 considered the image and likeness of God, worship, salvation and new creation, the role of the Church in modern society, globalisation, human rights and ecology.

Informal talks are scheduled for 24-27 May 2010 in Istanbul prior to a full meeting of the ICAOTD in Oxford, England, from 31 August to 6 September 2010.

In Istanbul discussions will focus around the Covenant, Women in the Episcopate, Apostolic Constitution and ordinariate, Moratoria re ordination of practising homosexuals and same sex blessings in marriage, ACC matters of significance, ongoing development for greater co-operation in the Diaspora – Episcopal Assemblies, Holy and General Synod – Pan Orthodox Conference.

The full meeting of ICAOTD in Oxford will focus on the human being under the following headings:

3.1.1 What is a human being?

Papers by Dr George Dragas on the biblical and patristic evidence, Dr Bogdan Lubardic on modern Orthodox thought, with reference to *The Church of the Triune God*, and a background paper by Dr Duncan Reid on "How Anglicans do theology".

Other papers to be presented include the human being through the understanding of ancestry, the understanding of the human being through the mystery of the Incarnation, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Communion of Saints using ARCIC material as a resource, the

understandings of the human being in Anglican theological thought – consideration of Catholic/Reformed thinking.

3.1.2 The freedom and growth of the human being with particular reference to the understanding of image and likeness

Including a paper by Metropolitan Kallistos, Tom Ferguson on Patristics and Tim Gorrige on Biblical, prophetic stands.

3.1.3 Human responsibility for creation; a critical overview of recent statements by our churches

Papers by Christine Hall and Christos Christakis on common threads to be drawn out of statements, etc from Orthodox and Anglicans

The Archbishop of Canterbury will be participating in the Dialogue on 4-5 September.

Membership of the ICAOTD:

Orthodox Church

Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia (Co-Chairman)
(Ecumenical Patriarchate)
Metropolitan Petros of Aksum
(Patriarchate of Alexandria)
The Revd Fr Alexander Haig (Patriarchate of Antioch)
The Revd Dr George Dion Dragas
(Patriarchate of Jerusalem)
The Revd Dr Kirill Hovorun (Patriarchate of Moscow)
Dr Bogdan Lubardic (Patriarchate of Serbia)
Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște (Patriarchate of Romania)
Bishop Melkhisedek of Herety (Patriarchate of Georgia)
The Revd Dr Giorgi Zviadadze (Patriarchate of Georgia)
Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Kition (Church of Cyprus)
Bishop Ilia of Philomelion (Church of Albania)
The Revd Dr Christos B Christakis (Co-Secretary)
The Revd Fr Andrzej Minko (Church of Poland)
The Revd Dr Vaclav Jezek (Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia)

Anglican Communion

Archbishop Roger Herft (Co-Chairman)
(The Anglican Church of Australia)
The Revd Dr Timothy Bradshaw (The Church of England) (Co -Secretary)
The Revd Dr Thomas Ferguson (The Episcopal Church)
The Revd Canon Jonathan Goodall (Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative)
Bishop William Gregg (The Episcopal Church)
The Revd Deacon Dr Christine Hall (The Church of England)
The Revd Canon Philip Hobson OGS (The Anglican Church of Canada)
Ms Natasha Klukach (The Anglican Church of Canada)
Bishop Michael Lewis (The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & the Middle East)
The Revd Dr Duncan Reid (The Anglican Church of Australia)
The Revd Canon Professor John Riches (Scottish Episcopal Church)
Bishop John Stroyan (The Church of England)
The Revd Joseph Wandera (The Anglican Church of Kenya)
Neil Vigers (Staff - Anglican Communion Office)

3.2 ANGLICAN – ORIENTAL ORTHODOX DIALOGUE

Because of internal Anglican Communion issues this dialogue is currently rather quiet. There have been no meetings since the last General Synod. We have yet to replace Bishop John Stewart as a representative on such a dialogue.

3.3 ANGLICAN – UNITING CHURCH WORKING GROUP (Bishop Stephen Pickard)

Letter to:

29 March 2010

The Most Rev'd Dr Philip Aspinall
The Primate
The Anglican Church of Australia
PO Box 421
Brisbane QLD 4001

The Rev'd Terence Corkin
The General Secretary
The Uniting Church in Australia
PO Box A2266
Sydney South NSW 1235

Dear Dr Aspinall and Mr Corkin

It is our privilege, as co-chairpersons of the Joint Working Group of the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia, to submit a proposal for a Covenant of Association between our two churches.

Within the history of a much longer dialogue, our churches have been working on the possibility of such a Covenant since 1999. In 2001 the then Joint Working Group submitted *For the Sake of the Gospel* to the General Synod and the National Assembly of our two churches respectively. It was a proposal for a limited recognition of the ordained ministries of our churches.

The present report reflects what the Working Group, which resumed meeting in August 2007 with a new membership, has learnt from responses to the earlier proposal. This new proposal is simpler, less ambitious and more practical, but recommends a step that has not been taken before in the history of our two churches.

We submit this proposal for a Covenant of Association between our two churches in the hope that it will be welcomed and meet with favourable consideration in the national councils of our churches and with the prayer that it may promote the unity and mission of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Yours sincerely

The Rt Revd Dr Stephen K Pickard
Co-chairperson for the Anglican group
The Joint Working Group

The Revd Prof Christiaan Mostert
Co-chair for the Uniting group
The Joint Working Group

AN ANGLICAN-UNITING CHURCH COVENANT OF ASSOCIATION

Anglican Church of Australia-Uniting Church in Australia Joint Working Group

Background:

This proposal for a Covenant of Association emerges out of many years of dialogue on a variety of issues relating to Church, Baptism and Ministry. In particular this Covenant builds upon *An Agreed Statement on Baptism* (1985) and the more comprehensive report *For the Sake of the Gospel: Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministries in the Anglican and Uniting Churches in Australia* (2001). Following *For the Sake of the Gospel*, further comments, resolutions and recommendations were received from both the Anglican General Synod and the Uniting Church Assembly, including the Church Law Commission and the Doctrine Commission of the Anglican General Synod. The report was discussed at length in national trilateral meetings between the Uniting, Anglican and Lutheran churches. In 2007, detailed comments were received from the Inter-Anglican Commission on Ecumenical Relations (IASCER). These responses to *For the Sake of the Gospel* from both national and international bodies have enabled the Joint Working Group to develop and clarify earlier deliberations regarding ministry.¹

For Anglicans there remain serious constitutional and theological difficulties in receiving, as deacons or priests in the Anglican Church, ministers of the Uniting Church in Australia who are not episcopally ordained. As a result the interchangeability of ordained ministries is not possible at present.

Despite this difficulty, the Working Group has been encouraged to build upon existing forms of cooperation by proposing a formal *Covenant of Association*.² The Joint Working Group believes that such a Covenant would provide for a limited exchange of ministries consonant with the legal and constitutional provisions of our respective churches. Both churches continue to work together in formally constituted Cooperating Parishes and in many other ways, and may continue to explore further forms of cooperation in mission and service.³ They have both made formal commitments to significant levels of cooperation under the National Council of Churches in Australia's covenanting process.⁴ On the Eucharist, *For the Sake of the Gospel* established in a number of points a high degree of agreement. There is substantive agreement on the sacrament of baptism;⁵ the two churches recognise

¹ *For the Sake of the Gospel* is available online:

<http://assembly.uca.org.au/unity/dialogues.html> and
<http://www.anglican.org.au/governance.cfm?SID=21&SSID=43&PID=127>

² The term 'Covenant of Association' is used in the General Synod July 2001, resolution 41/01: 'That the General Synod... (3) resolves to explore a formal Covenant of Association with the Uniting Church in Australia...'

³ As outlined, for example, in *Steps to Unity*, Anglican Church of Australia (1999) Para. 6.3 (c) 1-17. This includes working together to better align levels and regions of leadership and decision-making; annual preaching exchanges; ways of cooperating in relation to selection, training and preparing for ordination of clergy; regular heads of churches' meetings to explore ways of enhancing cooperation; joint participation in mission activities (religious education in schools, chaplaincy, community events); exploring possibilities for joint branding of enterprises and activities where cooperative arrangements are in place.

⁴ See 'Australian Churches Covenanting Together', National Council of Churches in Australia, 2004.

⁵ *An Agreed Statement on Baptism* was formally adopted by both Churches in 1985. *An Agreed Statement on the Eucharist* including *A Proposal for an Interim Eucharistic Sharing* between the two Churches was adopted by the Assembly of the Uniting Church in 1991. It was approved as a 'basis for further discussion' by the Anglican General Synod of 1992. The 2001 report, *For the Sake of the*

each other's baptism and extend eucharistic hospitality to members of the other church⁶.

The Joint Working Group recognises that important unresolved matters remain.⁷ These need not hinder the establishment of a Covenant of Association. Indeed such a Covenant will create what the Anglican-Methodist Covenant of New Zealand describes as an 'ecumenical space', in which these issues can be explored together:

Ecumenical space offers us a way forward. In such a space we affirm our common Christian identity and have the possibility for a new discourse as we talk to one another in a new way. This provides a greater opportunity to discern together Christ's will for the church in ways that are not possible in isolation from each other. In this way ecumenical space brings the churches into living encounter with one another.⁸

The Present Proposal

The proposed Covenant is important for both our churches as it states clearly and unambiguously at the national level what our two churches wish to encourage at the local level 'for the sake of the Gospel'. It offers a formal framework for cooperation and growing together through shared ministry and service, including what is already permitted and occurring at the local level in parishes and other cooperative arrangements. It is vital that such local arrangements be duly recognised by their national church bodies. A formal Covenant of Association between the two Churches is an appropriate way for the national bodies of each Church to recognise and encourage ecumenical endeavour in ministry and mission.

In the words of leading Anglican ecumenist Paul Avis, 'formal synodical acknowledgements' are necessary as well as 'informal, tacit modes of acknowledgement' because the latter

Gospel, included an important paragraph identifying common agreement on the Eucharist which may be compared to the agreed statement on the Eucharist in the *Anglican and Lutheran Covenant for Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation*, 2001.

⁶ See the *Agreed Statement on Baptism* (1985), Responsibilities of the Baptised (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).' In Raymond K. Williamson (ed.) *Stages on the Way* (1994) p.147. For detail on Anglican rules in regard to eucharistic hospitality see General Synod 1985, Canon 74/85 on reception of Holy Communion in other churches and Canon 14/73 concerning non-Anglicans receiving Holy Communion in Anglican Churches.

The practice of the Uniting Church and its predecessor churches varied. Both Presbyterian and Methodist practice involved a supervision of church rolls and the distribution of communion tokens or membership tickets, but other Christians present would be welcomed to communion. In recent times, many ministers have simply invited 'all those who love the Lord.' *Uniting in Worship-2* (2005), spells out the implications of that invitation: 'Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.' Some Christians may feel unable to accept this invitation due to restrictions of their own tradition, but Anglicans (by the canons quoted) are free to receive holy communion in a Uniting Church, and are fully welcome to do so.

⁷ For example, the difference between personal and conciliar forms of episcopate, lay participation in the laying-on of hands in ordination, differences in understanding of the nature of the diaconate, lay presidency at the Eucharist, and the ordination of persons in same-sex relationships.

⁸ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant 2007* (Aotearoa-New Zealand).

can still leave lingering doubts about how one church really regards another. It still gives scope for individuals to assume that one church enjoys (or thinks it enjoys) advantages that the other lacks. It allows prejudiced personal opinions to undermine ecumenical goodwill. A formal synodical act of acknowledgement is intended to lay all such fears, doubts, prejudices and assumptions to rest by a considered, objective declaration of the ecclesial status of the churches concerned⁹.

This Anglican-Uniting Church Covenant of Association points the way forward; it gathers the past, confirms the present and enables future work to be undertaken on the path to shared life in the gospel.

Recommendations to our Churches

1. That this report and the following proposal for a Covenant of Association be received and endorsed by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia and the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.
2. That the governing bodies of both churches take such steps as are necessary to enter into this Covenant of Association.
3. That the two churches establish, as soon as practicable, a joint committee to carry forward the implementation of the commitments of this Covenant.

An Anglican-Uniting Church Covenant of Association

Under the leading of the Holy Spirit, heeding the Lord Jesus' prayer that his disciples might be one, for the sake of the gospel and as the fruit of three decades of mutual dialogue, the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia make the following affirmations and commitments:

Affirmations

1. We affirm that each of our churches stands in the continuity of the apostolic faith, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the ecumenical creeds.
2. Despite our failures and brokenness in discipleship, we see in each church a genuine desire to witness faithfully to the Gospel and to be engaged in God's mission in the world. We recognise that each of our churches is a part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.
3. We affirm that in both our churches the word of God is truly preached and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion are faithfully administered.
4. We affirm that both the ordained ministries and other ministries of our churches are given by God as instruments of grace, to build up the people of God in faith, hope and love, and to share in God's mission in the world.
5. We affirm that ordained ministers in both churches have received the inward call of the Holy Spirit, and the commission of Jesus Christ given through the church, to provide for a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral oversight.
6. We affirm that personal, communal and collegial oversight (episcopate) is embodied and exercised in both churches in different and complementary forms, personal and conciliar, to serve the Church's faithfulness to the Gospel.

⁹ Paul Avis, in an internal paper for the Council for Christian Unity (UK), 'Seeking Unity by Stages,' but developed in his book, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010), chapter 3: 'New Paths in Ecumenical Method.'

Commitments

1. Building upon our common confession of the apostolic faith, our common baptism and our participation in God's mission, we commit ourselves to advance the visible unity of the Anglican and Uniting Churches in Australia at every level, as a contribution to the full visible unity of the Church of Christ.
2. We commit ourselves to continue to welcome each other's baptised members to participate in the fellowship, worship and mission of our churches, and to offer eucharistic hospitality to members of each other's churches.
3. We commit ourselves to develop shared resources, to cooperate in mission, evangelism and our public witness to the apostolic faith.
4. We commit ourselves to listen to each other and to take account of each other's concerns, especially in areas that affect our relationship as churches, and to develop ways by which our churches may regularly consult one another on significant matters of faith and order and life and work.
5. We commit ourselves to overcome the remaining obstacles to a fuller visible unity, looking forward to the time when our life together will make possible a reconciled and interchangeable ordered ministry.
6. We will take all possible steps to a closer fellowship in as many areas of Christian life and witness as possible.
7. We make these commitments for the sake of the Gospel.

Participants in the Joint Working Group

The Anglican Church of Australia: *The Rt Rev'd Dr Stephen Pickard (co-chair from 2008), the Rev'd Dr David Powys (co-chair till 2008), the Ven. Philip Muston, the Rev'd Canon Dr Colleen O'Reilly and the Rev'd Tim Gibson.*

The Uniting Church in Australia: *The Rev'd Prof. Christiaan Mostert (co-chair), the Rev'd Prof. Robert Gribben, the Rev'd Graham Perry, the Rev'd (Deacon) Pamela White, Ms Janet Wood (till 2008) and Ms Maureen Postma (from 2008).*

3.4 AUSTRALIAN ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC (AustARC) DIALOGUE (Bishop Douglas Stevens)

AUSTARC was commissioned by the appropriate overseeing bodies, the Anglican General Synod and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in June 1993. It's initial mandate was:

- a) the promotion of the international ARCIC
- b) the development of contacts with others ARC's
- c) the consideration of matters of particular concern within Australia.

Since it's inception AUSTARC has examined the implications of the various ARCIC statements and has published several commentary booklets on the subjects of ministry (1996), the Saints and prayer (1997), Gospel Authority (2004), the Church (2007) in addition to producing material for the Anglican Roman Catholic Day of Prayer for Reconciliation.

AUSTARC's activity over the past two years has been a close shared reading of the IARCUUM document *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*. This small booklet which summarises ARCIC's achievements, calls for Anglicans and Roman Catholics to seek practical ways of expressing ARCIC's work.

AUSTARC has decided to re-release a small document from 1997 called *The Saints and Christian Prayer*. This was published in response to the beatification of Mary McKillop and in anticipation of her canonisation we have decided to again draw attention to the call to live hopefully and faithfully in the Australian context.

As the international relationship between our traditions had adjusted in recent years we shall seek to examine ecumenical implications and possibilities. As both traditions are challenged by structural, theological and ethical issues, the trust and fellowship experienced within our AUSTARC has allowed us to share our pain and hopes with one another.

3.5 ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN DIALOGUE (Bishop Garry Weatherill)

The Anglican Lutheran Dialogue stalled just after the last General Synod and LCA National Synod. Both churches, through the Co-chairs and through the Primate and the National President have committed themselves to continuing this important work, building on the theological and pastoral achievements of the past decade. Plans for the Dialogue group to resume its work in July 2010 are well in hand. Theological focus for the next period of dialogue will be on the foundation, role and experience of episcopate in our churches. Of particular use will be the fine report from the Roman Catholic / Lutheran Consultation on episcopacy published in early 2008. Pastoral focus will be on monitoring the agreed sharing of pastoral care and Eucharistic hospitality in rural and regional areas, and on the various approaches to diaconal ministry in our churches.

The Rev'd Dr Cathy Thompson, from the Diocese of Brisbane, continues to represent the ACA on the international Anglican/Lutheran Dialogue.

3.6 WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (Ms Alison Preston)

3.6.1 Election of new General Secretary

Norwegian Lutheran Rev. Dr Olav Fyske Tveit (b1960) commenced as the new General Secretary in January 2010, following the resignation of Kenyan Methodist Rev. Samuel Kobia. Before taking up the post of general secretary, Tveit served the WCC as a member of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission and as a co-chair of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum core group. Tveit was also the general secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations (2002-09). Dr Tveit is a respected theologian, engaging public speaker, committed to creative and practical expressions of Christian unity, and an eloquent representative for the ecumenical movement at national and international levels. Dr Tveit brings a youthful, articulate, confident and inspiring leadership style to the WCC, which is much needed in the life of the WCC at this time.

Dr Tveit's sermon on his installation The Ecumenical Movement of the Cross can be found: <http://www.oikoumene.org/gr/resources/documents/general-secretary/sermons/ecumenical-cross.html>

3.6.2 Emergency 'ACT Alliance' launched

The ACT Alliance, a global coalition of church-based emergency relief and development agencies, was formally launched in March, 2010. The new body is a merger of the disaster relief network ACT International and its sister organization ACT Development, both created through the leadership of the WCC. More than 100 agencies are members of this alliance, including Australian Anglican organization *Angli*CORD, and the Australian ecumenical agency Act for Peace. ACT Alliance is now one of the world's largest humanitarian bodies with a combined budget of 1.5 billion US dollars. It provides emergency food aid, shelter, water and sanitation facilities, and poverty reduction programmes in the world's poorest countries. At the launch, WCC General Secretary Dr Olav Tveit said that "the ACT Alliance is a genuine expression of the ecumenical movement, the call to be one so that the world can believe that God is a loving and caring God for all humankind." www.actalliance.org

3.6.3 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation - Jamaica - 2011, May 17-25

The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) will be a "harvest festival" celebrating the achievements of the Decade to Overcome Violence which began in 2001. The 2011 title is "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" and the four main themes will be Peace in the Community, Peace with the Earth, Peace in the Marketplace, and Peace among the Peoples. At the same time it encourages individuals and churches to renew their commitment to non-violence, peace and justice. Churches are invited to submit presentations on initiatives related to peace building and conflict resolution in their context. www.overcomingviolence.org

3.6.4 WCC 10th Assembly, South Korea 2013

The WCC Assembly in 2013 will be held in Busan, South Korea. The South Korean National Council of Churches have expressed their hope that the hope that the WCC's presence could "contribute greatly toward peaceful reconciliation and reunification" for the divided peninsula of Korea.

Reasons for selecting South Korea included the diversity and vibrancy of the churches, the inter-religious context of Korea, the "new horizon" of holding an assembly in the Far East for the first time, the opportunities to engage with evangelical and Pentecostal churches, and hope for unity on the peninsula. A central question for those planning the 2013 Assembly is whether and how to offer greater participation for other Christian world communions and ecumenical partners. While still under consideration, invitations may be issued to the wider ecumenical movement to participate in non-decision-making aspects of the Assembly.

3.7 CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA , 2010 (Archbishop Roger Herft)

3.7.1 13th General Assembly

The 13th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 14-21 April 2010. Three hundred and eighty delegates representing almost all the nations within Asia, including Iran, Australia and New Zealand, met together to:

- a) Celebrate the unity of the Church in Asia in worship, study and action.
- b) Express the common vision of the churches for the direction and mission of the CCA.
- c) Review the mission and receive the work of the CCA carried out through its programs, and to set general directions for the future programs of the CCA.
- d) Speak on public issues when necessary.

The Anglican Church of Australia was represented by The Reverend Canon Robert Vun, Ms Svenja von Dietze and The Most Reverend Roger Herft.

Kuala Lumpur hosted the inaugural Assembly in 1959, Penang in 1977 and was glad to welcome CCA back for the third time. The burning of several churches a few months before and the location of the offices of the Muslim party in the very hotel in which the meeting took place, provided a context which highlighted much of the tensions present in Asia today. The General Secretary noted:

Asia is the biggest multi-cultural continent in the world. Deep-seated differences over political and economic systems, ethnicity, gender, religion/beliefs and cultural traditions have prevented the countries from seeking and working towards a shared destiny.

Asian people continue to have difficulties and there is crisis in almost all aspects of human life – socially, economically, politically and ecologically. The prevailing international economic and

political models have failed to address injustice and inequality. Therefore, people living around us are crying out for justice, peace and a sustainable society.

The participants at the Asian Ecumenical Council, the youth delegates and the stewards bonded together to provide a rich diversity of worship that included drama, song, dance and music. Surrounded by prayer, Bible study and worship the sessions of the Assembly had keynote addresses by The Most Reverend Roger Herft, The Reverend Dr D Preman Niles, Dr Ruth Manorama and The Reverend Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Reports were received from the President, General Secretary and Treasurer. Several far-reaching recommendations calling for changes in the CCA structures were presented by the Review Group, accepted by the Assembly and forwarded to the incoming General Committee for action. An evening on Hypotheticals offered occasion for controversy to be handled in a Godly manner. The documents are available from the CCA website at www.cca.org.hk/.

Each evening there was a testimony of living faith. A pastor unlawfully jailed in the Philippines spoke of how God used this injustice for him to become a witness to many prisoners. A Senator of the Malaysian Cabinet described his role in the Borneo revival and his current witness to God who makes the impossible possible. An elder from the Church in Myanmar described the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis and the sense of being lifted up by the prayers, messages and support from the rest of the Church. Mr Sokreaksa Himm described his conversion from a person filled with hate seeking revenge for the butchering of his entire family to one who has, through the power of forgiveness in Christ, brought grace, mercy and peace to the villagers responsible for their deaths. A woman and a man suffering from HIV/AIDS spoke of the 'life' given to them by the Christian Church in Malaysia.

Worship in local congregations offered delegates an opportunity to witness the vibrant faith and witness of Christians in Malaysia.

The process of elections requiring national representation governed by a balance of male/female, youth/laity/clergy proved to be a challenging time for the delegates.

The Reverend Dr Henriette Tabita Hutabarat-Lebang from Indonesia was elected the first women General Secretary of CCA. Ms Svenja von Dietze from Australia (Anglican) was elected to the General Committee and Angus Brownlie (Anglican) and Ms Tess Keam (Uniting Church) were elected to serve in the Youth and Justice Commissions respectively.

The implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Review will require firm and strong action from the newly elected General Committee. It is salutary to note that 50 years on CCA is dependent for 80% of its funding from sources outside of its current membership.

A lunch hosted by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato Seri Mohammed Najib Abdul Razak, and in the presence of five key Cabinet members provided an opportunity for a selected delegate from CCA, Archbishop Herft, to call upon the Government to provide sanctuary for minority religious groups and gave the opportunity for the Prime Minister to outline his vision for "One Malaysia". He acknowledged the special place of Islam. His Government was committed to the creation of a cohesive society in which difference is celebrated rather than feared or tolerated. He hoped for a time when all Malaysians would move beyond respectful acceptance to a genuine acknowledgement of other faiths as contributing to the common good.

Since its founding The Anglican Church of Australia has provided significant leadership in the CCA and this contribution is profoundly valued.

The fledgling churches and Christians in Asia call out to us to partner them, pray and learn from them what it means to bear costly witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that includes great suffering, persecution, ridicule, imprisonment and death.

May we not fail them in their desire and ours to be called to prophesy, reconcile and heal and to be the good news of God's saving act in Jesus Christ in one of the most populous, diverse and divided regions of our world.

3.7.2 50th Anniversary

The 50th Anniversary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was celebrated in Parapat, Indonesia, from 3-7 March 2007. I was elected to represent The Anglican Church of Australia at this event.

The Christian Church in Asia is challenged by its place as a minority faith (except in the Philippines) in the midst of other resurgent religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. The emergence of China as a political and economic player has created a dilemma for the Western democratic ideal. China retains its commitment to a form of Communism that has allowed for economic expansion in a contained totalitarian framework, thus giving other global communities an alternative that cannot be dismissed.

The place of India, North Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Burma in the world political arena has a bearing on the witness of the Church in the whole region.

Australia's close links with the economy of the Asian markets and the presence of growing migrant populations from Asia makes it imperative for the Church in Australia to engage with the Church in Asia.

The CCA provides a different hybrid of the ecumenical movement and the governing principles of the organisation reflect these priorities:

First, is of life and for the life of the mission of the church in Asia that is not its own but one that is of God and is therefore grounded in acknowledgement of and engagement in a common obedience

of witness to God's mission. A second dimension of its mandate is the task of helping to enable and equip the churches and Christian bodies in the region in their life and in their various ministries. It is also to help in the development of more effective Christian responses to changing situations and issues in the life of church and society in Asia. Third, the CCA is servant of this vision of the church and exists as an organ and a forum of continuing co-operation among churches and national Christian bodies. Fourth, in its service within the framework of the wider ecumenical movement. And Fifth, in its efforts to manifest common obedience and life together, it is to seek to bring about the equal participation of women, men, youth, clergy and lay in church and society.

The 50th Anniversary Conference was held in the rhythm of Bible study, worship and testimonies. The voice of the suffering, persecuted, imprisoned and courageous witnessing Church was movingly expressed in story, drama, poetry, testimonies and art.

Key note addresses, responses and panel discussions on how the CCA as an instrument of the Churches serves to enhance Christian witness and collaborative endeavour were highlighted.

The ecological crisis affecting the livelihood of many of the poor societies in Asia was discussed. Delegates spent a day in a tree planting event which was followed by an open air evangelistic rally attended by over 30,000 people. The welcome and hospitality offered by the Islamic community in Indonesia provided a different angle to the stereotyping of this faith that is reflected by the media.

During the last year Margaret Rodgers was requested to be part of the CCA round table and conference and on receipt of her report the Standing Committee of General Synod agreed to a stronger engagement with this ecumenical body. Representatives from The Anglican Church of Australia have had strong involvement in the past and the need for Australia's commitment to this ideal was reiterated.

The presence of The Reverend Dr Rienzie Perera at the General Synod is a mark of this engagement.

The Anglican Church in Australia has much to learn and much to offer the Christians in Asia in our common desire to be witnesses to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

3.8 WCC FAITH AND ORDER PLENARY COMMISSION - CRETE 2009 (Rev'd Dr Richard Treloar)

This, my second Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting (as distinct from the smaller Standing Commission, which meets annually), struck me as a much more hopeful and forward-looking gathering than its predecessor in Kuala Lumpur (2004). The fact that some 80% of participants were new to the work of F&O was at once an encouragement and a challenge: encouraging in so far as it suggests there are plenty of people – including younger theologians and pastors – who are keen to engage with this ecumenical work; challenging to the extent that it suggests F&O's 'institutional memory' may be thinning.

The current F&O studies on Ecclesiology, Moral Discernment in the Churches, and Tradition and traditions: Sources of Authority (for the steering of which Standing Commission assumes primary responsibility), were embraced and advanced in this broader forum through the use of a small group format at the Orthodox Academy. Data generated in small groups, as well as in Plenary discussions, has been fed back to the moderators and working groups associated with each study. Though we must wait to see how the studies will be further sharpened by this input, as a rapporteur for one small group in Crete, and a member of the Standing Commission working group for the Sources of Authority study, I can attest to the apparent success and the perceived value of this way of working.

With respect to the Ecclesiology study, formal responses from member churches are crucial ahead of the next WCC General Assembly, and as at October 2009 no response to either *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (F&O Paper 198) or 'Called to be the One Church' (the text from Porto Alegre) had been received from the Anglican Church of Australia.

Owing to some uncertainty about the status and maturity of the draft text, the Baptism study is currently in 'abeyance', but there is a very real determination within F&O that the extensive work done to date not be lost, and some clarity with respect to the future of this important study will be forthcoming after Standing Commission meets in June 2010.

More generally speaking, F&O finds itself in 'interesting times' in terms of ecumenical methodology, with a great deal of energy having been (rightly) diverted into bi- and tri-lateral dialogues at a more local or regional level in recent years, and the 'faith and order' agenda somewhat overshadowed by the 'life and work' agenda – not only of the WCC, but of the ecumenical movement as a whole. The need to rethink its role within that context, and in the light of the rise of 'receptive ecumenism', has not diminished enthusiasm for the theological mandate of F&O, however, and there is some talk of the possibility of another World Conference on Faith and Order to address these among other pressing issues.

Having served first as a proxy on Standing Commission in January 2002, and being subsequently nominated to Standing Commission for the remainder of that term (until 2005) and a then second term (2006-13), my understanding is that the 'shared' position I currently fill will revert to the UCA after the 2013 Assembly. I have alerted Sandy Yule (of the UCA's CUWG) to this prospect, and he assures me that the necessary processes for nomination are under way. In the meantime, it continues to

be a pleasure and privilege – and an education! – to represent these two churches in such a long-standing multi-lateral ecumenical conversation, and I am grateful to GSERC for the opportunity. Whilst I regret being unable to attend the Standing Commission meeting in June of this year due to other ministry commitments, I look forward to those of 2011 and 2012, and to reporting on same to the GSERC, along with the CUWG and the NCCA Faith & Unity Commission.

Supplementary Attachments - Reports on WCC Faith and Order Plenary Commission Meeting Orthodox Academy of Crete Kolympari, October 7-13 2009

3.9 ASIA ECUMENICAL OFFICERS, WCC - INDONESIA 2009, JULY (Bishop Philip Huggins)

The idea of this meeting emerged at the previous Ecumenical Officers gathering at the WCC in Geneva. By holding it in Indonesia, a large number of Indonesian church leaders could attend.

Three Australians attended. Rev'd Prof James Haire, who gave the keynote address. His many years of missionary work in Indonesia, and ability to speak the language, meant he played a vital role. Revd Dr Sandy Yule, UCA EO was part of the Message Committee. I prepared the Bible studies and was also asked to lead the final worship at the Conference.

I am part of a Steering Committee to keep the momentum going, in association with CCA and WCC.

A Sri Lankan Priest with whom I spoke extensively about the reconciliation process amongst Sri Lankans in Australia, and in Sri Lanka, has suggested a next meeting be in Sri Lanka. Perhaps late 2010, hopefully contributing to the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka.

I also had many conversations with the Church of North India (CNI) and the Church of South India (CSI) representatives. There is a continuing interest in building better links between the Indian Church and our Anglican Church of Australia. Some initiatives have followed from this. For example, we were able to inform CNI and CSI leaders of our initiatives in response to publicity about attacks on Indian students in Australia. They, in turn, were able to pass this information on to anxious parents and families of Indian students in Australia.

3.10 ANGLICAN CHURCH – NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AUSTRALIA (NCCA) INVOLVEMENT (Revd Dr Erica Mathieson)

I report on the Anglican Church's involvement in the NCCA as a member of the NCCA Executive along with the Primate and Bishop Philip Huggins. I also note the work of the Centre for Ecumenical Studies of which the Primate is a Patron.

The Executive continues to meet three times a year for a day, with an evening of general discussion preceding it. It is anticipated that two, possibly three, churches will be welcomed into membership of the NCCA at the Forum in July.

Planning is underway for the next three-yearly Forum in Canberra, July 10-13, with the Rev'd Dr John Gibaut (Director of the Faith and Order Commission, WCC) to lead the Bible Studies. Dr Gibaut will also make a presentation at the pre-Forum event being organised by the Faith and Unity Commission.

The NCCA continues to experience financial difficulties, to the extent that it has been forced to withdraw funding (\$6000) for staff support from the Faith and Unity Commission.

An important development to note has been the change in ecumenical structures brought about by CWS's decision to withdraw funding and oversight of its state representatives from State Ecumenical Councils. Considerable time at Executive meetings for at least two years has been devoted to the tension in relationships between CWS and some of the State Ecumenical Councils.

The Centre for Ecumenical Studies, Charles Sturt University, is offering two courses in ecumenics as part of a BTh degree, one to be held in Canberra in conjunction with the NCCA Forum, and one in Sydney. Dr Gibaut will teach at both alongside other ecumenists.

4. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- 4.1 The annual meeting of our Ecumenical Relations Commission is proposed for Thursday 12 August 2010. As previously, we will meet at the General Synod office.

In the afternoon we will meet with the Roman Catholic Bishops at Stormanston House in McLaren Street, North Sydney. We meet with the Bishops' Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations.

Our discussion with the Roman Catholic Bishops will include local consequences of Pope Benedict's recent invitation to some Anglicans. Bishop Michael Putney chairs their Commission. Sr Elizabeth Delaney SGS is the Executive Secretary. The Primate will join us for this whole meeting.

Since last General Synod, the GSERC have generally met once a year, face-to-face. Otherwise our work is managed by email and teleconference, given the Budget realities of General Synod.

- 4.2 I have advised the Primate that I will complete my time as Chair of the Ecumenical Relations Commission at this General Synod.

I have been the Chair since the inception of this Commission several General Synods back!

It has been an enriching experience for which I am very grateful.

Once when asked why he was ready to travel so much for ecumenical meetings, Cardinal Walter Kasper replied that friendship is the key to improved ecumenical relations. In order to develop and deepen friendships one must take what opportunities are available for the conversations that lead

to better understanding, agreed common work and the ability to live graciously with differences of opinion.

I have been grateful for the conversations, meetings and therefore friendships which GSERC has evolved. However, of course, this has all been rather limited by the normal constraints of time and resources. General Synod budgetary issues have meant the Commission has had to function with fewer meetings. One hopes and prays that we have still been faithful to our Lord's prayer for our unity (John 17).

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Philip". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross-like mark at the beginning of the word.

Bishop Philip Huggins
Chairperson, General Synod Ecumenical Relations Commission

REPORT ON WCC FAITH & ORDER PLENARY COMMISSION MEETING ORTHODOX ACADEMY OF CRETE KOLYMPARI, OCTOBER 7-13 2009

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

I attach the paper “Report of the Meeting of the WCC Plenary Commission on Faith and Order” (F&O), prepared by the Plenary Commission at Crete and released by the F&O Secretariat earlier this year. This is an important companion document to this report.

SOME IMPRESSIONS

This, my second F&O Plenary Commission meeting (as distinct from the smaller Standing Commission), struck me as a much more hopeful and forward-looking gathering than its predecessor in Kuala Lumpur (2004). The fact that some 80% of participants were new to the work of F&O was at once an encouragement and a challenge: encouraging in so far as it suggests there are plenty of people – including younger theologians and pastors – who are keen to put their hands up for this ecumenical work; and challenging to the extent that it means ‘institutional memory’ is thinning in this particular multilateral forum. These challenges were partly addressed by a session on the WCC’s ‘consensus methodology’, which was helpful for newer and longer-serving commissioners alike, and a retrospective paper from Dame Mary Tanner, which refreshed our collective memory, and in which the UCA received honourable mention (as it did in several other papers on ecclesiology during the week) as an example of the achievement of the ecumenical movement.

The small group format which did the ‘heavy lifting’ in terms of the work of the meeting appeared successful, especially as daily worship and study were combined in the same collegial setting of these 12 ‘cells’, which met for up to 6 hours on some days. As a rapporteur for one of these groups I became acutely conscious of just how much material they generated, and how this was fed back to the moderators and working groups responsible for each of the current studies. Subsequent communications from Geneva would suggest that this process has worked well, and that the various study projects have been able to make substantial progress on the basis of the work conducted in those groups.

As always, the hospitality was exceptionally generous, and the fellowship amongst commissioners, staff, and consultants sincere. A number of old friends and new acquaintances engaged me over meals and coffee breaks on the state of the global communion of Anglican Churches. The genuine interest and concern shown reminded me of the affection in which the Anglican tradition is held ecumenically, and of its unique place and role in the ecumenical movement (see on ‘Receptive Ecumenism’ below) – a contribution both looked for from its partners in the Gospel and potentially compromised by the fault lines that currently exist.

In Plenary I was delighted to discover as my neighbour at the desk the (then) WCC General Secretary elect, Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, a humble and gracious man, and an impressive theologian, who studied 50 years’ worth (1948-98) of F&O texts for his

PhD and is (was still at that point) an active F&O commissioner. For all his familiarity with the history of F&O, Dr Tveit's vision for a strong and credible common witness is grounded in the churches' lived mutual accountability and solidarity, and he seems a most capable leader.

THE CURRENT STUDIES

Ecclesiology

Notwithstanding the deliberation of small groups at the meeting on specific questions from the working group on this study, and some very stimulating presentations to Plenary in response to both *The Nature and Mission of the Church (NMC)* and 'Called to be the One Church', the work here is really in the hands of the member churches ahead of the next General Assembly. As was the case with *BEM*, so with *NMC* there have been more responses to date (proportionately speaking) from theological faculties and ecumenical bodies than from the churches themselves. To the best of my knowledge, at the time of the meeting in Crete, the ACA was yet to respond formally to either text?

In an intervention on the floor of Plenary in response to several papers which touched on the same concern, I raised the question framed in the UCA's response to *NMC* as to whether a further iteration of the text might provide for a fuller discussion of the place of inter-religious dialogue in ecumenical ecclesiology. There seemed to be general agreement (both in Plenary and in group reports – the only such reports of the meeting fed back into Plenary, as opposed to going directly to study moderators) that an ecclesiological treatment of this issue was desirable in our current geo-political context – indeed vital for those churches for whom it constitutes one of the most pressing ecclesial and missional concerns.

It was interesting to note that the context papers from panellists representing parts of the world 'which need to be heard more in F&O gatherings' (from the Director's preparatory letter of 10 July 2009), including Latin America, the Pacific region, Africa, and the Middle East, all stressed the 'life and work' dimension of WCC (as distinct from 'faith and order') as the primary means of discerning and expressing visible unity.

The group reports affirmed the need for greater attention to contextual reflection, and to the ethical dimensions of ecclesiology. Extensive thought was also given – as requested by the working group – to aspects of the text's promotion and reception (including through regional consultations, better use of the internet and other electronic media), and how the text might be developed such that it might become more of a 'living document'.

Moral Discernment in the Churches

On the strength of careful preparation and advance distribution of case study material, and the detailed briefing of moderators and rapporteurs prior to the start of the meeting proper, the work on this study at Crete was conducted almost entirely in the small groups, each of which devoted a total of six hours to one of the four case studies. The group I was involved with had the study on human sexuality, which had been well designed by The Rt Revd Dr James Tengatenga, Anglican Bishop of

Southern Malawi. Other studies were focussed on issues arising from globalisation, stem cell research, and proselytism.

This small group work represented the second of three stages of this study: stage 1 being descriptive (including the generation of the case studies themselves); stage 2 being analytical; and stage 3 synthetic – a constructive response to the material produced by small groups at the Plenary Commission meeting.

The task of the groups was not to try and ‘solve’ the particular issue in question, but to consider how these discussions are already taking place in our churches, and to reflect on where common ground is to be found, how and why churches and individual Christians form different conclusions, and how to prevent principled differences from becoming church dividing. The case studies are thus ‘tools’ to help the churches articulate an ecumenical methodology with respect to moral discernment, and, as such, do not constitute F&O Papers for publication.

Whilst the fruit of our labours in Crete cannot be tried until the synthetic task has been undertaken by the Moral Discernment and the Churches (*MDC*) working group, this study, most clearly of the three current studies, is modelling ‘receptive ecumenism’ (which featured at several points in the meeting) as something of a hermeneutical key for the vexed issue of moral discernment. As Paul Murray explained to Plenary in his paper ‘Recent Initiatives in “Receptive Ecumenism” at Durham University, UK, and Their Relationship to the Work of the Faith and Order Commission’:

‘Receptive Ecumenism’ is a strange kind of ecumenism for it seeks to further unity not by directly seeking to overcome areas of disagreement *between* traditions, vital though that be, but rather by addressing difficulties *within* traditions and the possibilities that are open for respective enrichment and deepening through learning *across* traditions.

Tradition and traditions: Sources of Authority for the Church

This study likewise sought to engage commissioners as far as possible in the work of gathering around particular (patristic) texts, to illustrate and explore questions at the heart of the study process. After some introduction of the study’s history and methodology and some lively discussion in Plenary, small groups were given texts from the Teachers and Witnesses of the Early Church (TWEC) with questions for discussion and reflection to feed responses back to the working group for this study, along with some brainstorming about future directions, especially with respect to the second planned consultation on ‘sources and forms of authority in the churches’. As a member of this working group to whom all of the small group reports have been made available, judging from the wealth of material to be processed before the next Standing Commission meeting in June 2010, this process looks to have worked well.

Building on the insights of the Fourth World Conference in Montreal (1963), as taken up in Bristol (1967), this study examines tradition as that gift and work of the Holy Spirit which is ever leading us back to and towards the mind of Christ from within a postmodern context which sees the twin risks of the rise of fundamentalism on the one hand, and the loss or erosion of tradition(s) on the other. It offers the churches

a 'hermeneutics of collective re-reading', focussed initially on patristic sources – not as some necessarily privileged authority, but as being amongst the earliest stewards of the Tradition in its (already) several traditions – and then extending to other sources in the second consultation, as a means of contributing to an ecumenical 'vocabulary' and 'grammar' with respect to how such sources are received and function authoritatively. This is something the consultation held in Cambridge, UK, in 2008, began to uncover with respect to the TWEC, and serious ongoing ecumenical study of this particular and formative source has been recommended.

As with the *MDC* study, we will have to await the outcome of the second consultation, and the harnessing of work done in small groups at Crete, before the progress of this study can be more fully evaluated, and its findings made more widely available.

Baptism?

The absence of this study from the program in Crete was noted in responses to the Director's opening report, and again in the closing session for Standing Commission members, where it was emphasised that the good and hard work done on this study over many years must not be lost to the ecumenical movement on account of differences of opinion as to the 'status' and 'maturity' of the text. It was agreed that the future of the study be on the next Standing Commission agenda, looking forward to the next General Assembly, and to the crucial Central Committee meeting prior to that in February 2012.

STANDING COMMISSION 2010

With that same (Central Committee) meeting in view, the decision was made that Standing Commission should meet in 2010, the suggestion having been made earlier that resources might be better deployed in smaller working and drafting groups on the back of Plenary Commission, given the amount of data generated for the three studies in Crete. A shorter 'combination' meeting is therefore to take place in Armenia in late June of this year, with several days set aside for working in study groups and some time for the broader Standing Commission agenda. Whilst a reasonable compromise, the process for belatedly settling on dates that worked for most members of Standing Commission was not ideal, and thus in February I found myself amongst a significant minority of commissioners unable to attend, including several study convenors and officers. This is disappointing on a personal level, as I have not missed a meeting since my term began in January 2002. It is troubling on an organisational level also, as one wonders how 'consensus' decisions are to be achieved in such circumstances. As I understand it, for example, only one of three Anglican commissioners will be present. That said, I fully support the decision of the UCA's Christian Unity Working Group and the ACA's General Synod Commission on Ecumenical Relations not to go to the expense of sending a proxy to an abbreviated meeting which is deep into the life of the current F&O Commission, and at which detailed drafting and planning work on studies will be conducted in already well-established working groups.

SOME CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Crete clearly saw a significant and enthusiastic (re-)engagement with the work of F&O from its member churches, and a commitment to both its current projects and its longer-term mandate. So much so, that the prospect raised *en passant* at the meeting of a sixth World Conference on Faith and Order (the last being in 1993) is now under serious consideration by Standing Commission. Much of what the Director described as the 'expected outcomes' from the small groups is now in the hands of the moderators and working groups of the various studies, and patience is needed to see how the studies are sharpened by this work. The 'uncontainable outcomes' Canon Gibaut foreshadowed in his report, arising from 'the gifts of the Holy Spirit to us and to the churches through [the] prayer . . . fellowship and pilgrimages [of] this week' were also in evidence amongst these 'works in progress'.

Rev'd Dr Richard Treloar

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE WCC PLENARY COMMISSION
ON FAITH AND ORDER**

07-14 October 2009

“That they may be one in God’s hand:
Called to be the One Church”

**Glory to God, whose power working in us
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.**

**Glory to God from generation to generation,
in the church and in Christ Jesus,
forever and ever. Amen**

I

1. In the spirit of the 2006 WCC Assembly’s statement on ecclesiology, “Called to be the One Church”, we, the 120 members of the Commission on Faith and Order, with thirty-seven guests, consultants and younger theologians gathered on the island of Crete in Greece. We received the most gracious hospitality of the Orthodox Academy of Crete, whose president is His Eminence Metropolitan Amphilochios of Kissamos and Selinon. His Eminence Metropolitan Damaskenos of Chania also welcomed and hosted the Commission on various occasions.
2. On behalf of the churches we represent we celebrated our common life in Christ, and we laboured to draw closer to the unity that is God’s gift. Our work took place in the context of daily prayer and Bible study. We carried out our work in plenary sessions, as well as in working groups. We gathered in confessional and regional caucuses during which particular concerns and contexts were shared. We met the bishops, clergy and faithful of the local Orthodox dioceses, parishes and monastic communities.
3. His All Holiness, Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, graced the first evening session of the Plenary Commission with his presence and with an opening address. He welcomed the Commission to the Orthodox Academy, of which he is patron, and gave his blessing to our Faith and Order work here in Crete. His address developed the commission theme in terms of “Unity as Calling, Conversion and Mission”. His Eminence Archbishop Ireneos of Crete also blessed us in the opening prayer.

II

4. In his report, His Eminence Metropolitan Dr Vasilios of Constantia-Ammochostos (Church of Cyprus), moderator of the Commission, reflected on the contributions of Faith and Order and its goal of unity. He raised two fundamental questions: how do Churches today perceive and define the nature of church unity? and for which unity do we speak, and for whom, when

a significant number of Christians reject the ecumenical movement as a whole? The Moderator also spoke of the importance of the Commission on Faith and Order finding more visibility within the World Council of Churches.

5. The Rev. Canon Dr John Gibaut (Anglican Church of Canada), director of Faith and Order, began his presentation by comparing those engaged in Faith and Order work to climatologists rather than to meteorologists. A meteorologist, he said, “thinks of the weather in terms of days, while a climatologist thinks of weather in terms of decades”. The work for Christian unity by means of theological dialogue can be comprehended only within the context of decades. Canon Gibaut also emphasized the role of the Plenary Commission as Faith and Order’s forum for theological debate and a basis of membership for participation in study groups and consultations.
6. A current president of the WCC and a former moderator of Faith and Order, Dame Mary Tanner (Church of England) gave a paper entitled “A view from the past”. Tracing Faith and Order since Edinburgh 1910, she reminded us that it is by the grace of God and by the wind of the Spirit blowing in the Faith and Order sails that the movement has journeyed as far as Crete 2009. Naming many of our ecumenical forebears, she invited us to cultivate Faith and Order relationships and to make room for new generations. Reflecting on the next stages of the ecumenical movement, Dame Mary wondered whether we may too easily have passed from a comparative method of conversation to the convergence/consensus method, too easily by-passing the rigour of really getting to know one another in listening for the gifts the others have to offer us, and by explaining the gifts we think our tradition has to offer them. She then posed two questions to us: how faithful have we been in holding before our churches the goal of visible unity, so richly understood as a koinonia whose origins are found in the very life of the Triune God? and, where do we go from here? She answered by calling us to fidelity to Faith and Order’s mandate, to believe in the churches’ reconciling mission in a broken world, and to say to one another, “I have need of you”.

III

7. The Plenary Commission’s theme, “Called to Be the One Church”, was first explicitly addressed by five participants. Dr Minna Hietamäki (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) spoke on the challenge and opportunity of unity and diversity in koinonia. In the aftermath of apartheid, the Rev. Professor Maake Masango (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa) drew our attention to the South African understanding of visible unity as organic unity. The Rev. Dr Marianela De la Paz Cot (Episcopal Church in Cuba), looked at the unity of the church in relation to its inclusivity, opening spaces for dialogue and cooperation across the religions in Cuba, where culture is key as an “access code” to dialogue. Sister Professor Maria Ko Ha Fong (Roman Catholic Church) spoke of the necessity of a kingdom-centred ecclesiology and a vision of Christian unity in the Asian context where Christians are a minority. His Eminence Metropolitan Professor Dr Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) said that “called to be the one church” presents to us two callings or calls: the first one is imperative to all of us, affirming our faith and belief to the One who constitutes the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

Church. The second call, coming from the Church as ekklesia, is an authentic prerogative confirming that we are all members of this One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and in responding we confirm our belonging to our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. The study on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* was discussed in plenary and in working groups. There were three plenary presentations. A consultant to the Commission, the Rev. Dr Paul Collins (Church of England) from Ecclesiological Investigations, presenting his paper, "Cognitive and Aesthetic Approaches to Theology and *The Nature and Mission of the Church*", addressed the objective and the experiential character of this document. The vice-moderator of the Commission, the Rev Dr Hermen Shastri (Methodist Church in Malaysia) described the process of receiving the responses to the document and the role of the plenary commissioners in that process. A co-moderator of the Ecclesiology Working Group, the Very Rev. Professor Dr. Viorel Ionita (Romanian Orthodox Church) stressed the importance of holding together *The Nature and Mission of the Church* with the Porto Alegre assembly statement, *Called to Be the One Church*. Further perspectives were offered by a panel comprising of the Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Anya Anyambod (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon); Fr Jorge Alejandro Scampini O.P. from Argentina (Roman Catholic Church); the Rev. Dr. Otele Perelini (Congregational Christian Church of Samoa) His Grace Metropolitan Geevarghese Coorilos from India (Syrian Orthodox Church), moderator of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC. These presentations accented the import of contextualization in Faith and Order work.
9. Working groups provided data for three aspects of the *NMC* study: a critical evaluation of the document, an update on the responses to the document thus far received and a review of the process leading towards the next stages of the document. In working groups we engaged in dialogue on three sets of question areas about: individual and group reception of the document; suggestions concerning the next steps to take in the ecclesiology study; and how the ecclesiological work of Faith and Order may be received in the churches. In a plenary session each of the groups presented a report of its findings on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* to the Plenary Commission.
10. The study on Tradition and traditions was also discussed in plenary and in working groups. In plenary a review was given on the 2008 Cambridge consultation which launched the study on sources of authority. The Rev. Dr Susan Durber (United Reformed Church) presented a paper on "Tradition and traditions: The teachers and witnesses of the early Church: a common source of authority, variously received?" The Very Rev. Dr Cyril Hovorun (Russian Orthodox Church, Ukraine) presented a paper entitled "Teachers and Witnesses of the Church: space for ecumenical convergence", speaking specifically to the Cambridge report. This was followed by a reflection on the consultation and an introduction to sources, as background for further study in working groups. Dr R. M. Keelan Downton (National Community Church, USA) challenged us to consider the viability of an "open source" approach to tradition. The Very Rev. Dr. Elpidophoros Lampriniadis (Ecumenical Patriarchate) introduced the three early church fathers whose texts would be

studied in working groups: Ambrose of Milan, Gregory the Theologian and Isaac of Ninevah. The Rev. Ofelia Alvarez Coleman (Moravian Church in Nicaragua) reacted to the Cambridge consultation from the Latin American perspective.

11. The task in working groups was then twofold: to address questions raised thus far concerning what authority the sources of the early church hold in our churches today and which primary issues ought to be considered for a follow-up consultation in 2011. Concerning the first task, working groups were given an excerpt from Ambrose of Milan (4th century CE), Gregory the Theologian (4th century CE) or Isaac of Ninevah (7th century CE). Group members reflected on how the particular patristic text might be received as a source of authority, in their churches in general and in their local ecclesial context in particular. Regarding the second task, working groups proposed possible angles from which a second consultation might advance the Cambridge findings. Questions answered by group members concerned aspects of authority such as acknowledgement of sources, appeal to sources and the role sources of authority play in shaping ecclesial identity.
12. The working groups engaged in the study on Moral Discernment in the Churches. Using a case study methodology, this project seeks to facilitate a deeper understanding of our common commitments and core values as followers of Christ even as we recognize and address particular moral issues over which diverse communities of faithful Christians hold principled disagreements. Four case studies were prepared by different scholars with expertise in the particular cases under examination: globalization and the World Alliance of the Reformed Churches, homosexuality and the churches of the Anglican Communion, proselytism of the Post-Soviet countries and the stem-cell research debate between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Germany. Each group received one case study and was given the task to engage in analysis of the disagreement, rather than to comment on, or resolve, any particular issue. In so doing, each group attempted to identify the nature and causes of disagreement in moral decision-making and to help build a foundation for continuing theological dialogue across lines of difference. These findings will serve the final goal of the MDC study, which is to provide concrete resources to help communities negotiate principled disagreement over moral issues, to undertake moral decision-making together and to arrive at a common moral discernment.

IV. A Message of Encouragement to the Churches

13. Paul was driven by the winds of Holy Spirit to Crete on his way to Rome, and desired to stay longer still (Acts 27:4-13). Like Paul and his companions, we too found in this idyllic setting a fair haven, nurtured by Greek hospitality and Orthodox spirituality. May the same Spirit refresh all Christians on their ecumenical journey towards that unity for which Christ prayed. After our week together, we recommit ourselves and our churches to the historic yet ever fresh mandate of Faith and Order, “to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe.” We have lived this vision, touched

its power in the Holy Spirit, and we commend it to all the churches, many of whose members live in contexts of war, poverty, sickness and injustice. Our work towards the unity of the Church is integrally linked to the Christian witness to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

14. To the fellowship of the churches linked through the World Council of Churches, we appeal for more visibility for the work of the Faith and Order Commission, as integral to the Council's very foundation and future. Recognizing the necessity of a common statement on ecclesiology for the future of the ecumenical movement, we invite the churches to make their responses to *The Nature and Mission of the Church* and "Called to be the One Church." The quest for the unity of the Church is inseparable from the unity of the human family. The visible unity of the Church is an imperative for its nature and mission; it is "called together with all people of good will to care for the integrity of creation in addressing the abuse and destruction of God's creation, and to participate in God's healing of broken relationships between creation and humanity" (*The Nature and Mission of the Church* I.B.40, page 26).

15. Our report closes with the words to us from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew:

"Beloved brothers and sisters, the unity that we seek is a gift from above, which we must pursue persistently as well as patiently; it is not something that depends solely on us, but primarily on God's judgment and *kairos*. Nevertheless, this sacred gift of unity is something that also demands something of us: radical conversion and reorientation so that we may turn humbly toward our common roots in the Apostolic Church and the communion of saints, but also so that we may entrust ourselves and submit to God's heavenly kingdom and authority. Finally, however, unity obliges us to a common purpose in this age as we expect the age to come; for it commits us to a sacred ministry and mission in realizing that kingdom, as we declare in the Lord's prayer, 'on earth as it is in heaven'. Such is the sacred gift that we have inherited. This, too, is the sacred task that lies before us. 'Let us go forth in peace to proclaim the good news to the world'" (from the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).