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THE INTERNATIONAL ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR UNITY AND MISSION November 20-24, 2001

Communiqué - 24 November 2001

Conversations with the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr George Carey and Pope John Paul II were the chief focus of the inaugural meeting of a new working group set up by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Anglican Communion. The establishment of this high-level working group was a direct result of the special international meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops held in Mississauga Canada in May 2000. The meetings were held in London and Rome from 20 to 24 November 2001.

This new working group, will be known as the "International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission" (IARCCUM), and complements the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) which since 1970 has been engaged in the official theological dialogue between the two Communion.

The sessions in London began with a time of retreat including prayer, reflection and the renewal of baptismal vows in the historic Crypt Chapel of Lambeth Palace. Conversations were held with the Archbishop of Canterbury during which Archbishop John Bathersby, the Roman Catholic Co-chairman, requested Dr Carey's prayers for this new initiative. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in sharing his vision for the work of the new Commission, assured the members of the Commission of his prayerful support for further progress towards visible unity between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church which will strengthen the mission of the Church of Christ.

In Rome discussions were held with Cardinal Walter Kasper, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Cardinal Kasper recalled the spiritual and fruitful nature of the Mississauga meeting. He explored with the Commission the Mississauga proposal for the preparation a joint declaration which would formally express the degree of agreement that exists between Anglicans and Catholics and consolidate the results of more than thirty years of dialogue. He also underlined the key role the Commission will play in guiding and promoting the response and reception of the agreed statements of ARCIC throughout the Churches.

The Commission began intensive work on these priority areas as well as on the development of strategies to translate the degree of spiritual communion that has been achieved into visible and practical outcomes. One possible avenue for greater co-operation is in the field of inter-faith relations, which was emphasised in a consultation with Bishop Michael Fitzgerald, the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Inter Religious Dialogue. Amidst the tensions and conflicts which make our present world context so fragile, the members affirmed the importance of deepening our joint commitment to work together in social and cultural spheres for the defence of human dignity and the promotion of justice and peace.

Pope John Paul II received the Commission in private audience at the Vatican. Bishop David Beetge, the Anglican Co-chairman of the Commission, delivered greetings to the Holy Father from the Archbishop of Canterbury and sought the Pope's blessing on this new phase of work. His Holiness affirmed that greater unity will be part of our witness to the world of a Spirit-led way of overcoming division. He urged the Commission to intensify the efforts to deepen the communion we now share and to be led by the Holy Spirit in our journey towards full visible unity between the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

The next plenary meeting of the Commission will be from 19 to 23 November 2002, in Malta.

The members of IARCCUM:

Anglicans

Bishop David Beetge (South Africa, Co-Chairman)
Archbishop Peter Carnley (Australia)
Bishop Edwin Gulick (USA)
Archbishop Peter Kwong (Hong Kong)
Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali (England, also member of ARCIC)
Dr Mary Tanner (England)
The Revd Canon Jonathan Gough (Archbishop of Canterbury's Office)
The Revd Canon David Hamid (Anglican Communion Office, Co-Secretary).

Roman Catholics

Archbishop John Bathersby (Australia, Co-Chairman)
Archbishop Alexander Brunett (USA, also Co-Chairman of ARCIC)
Bishop Anthony Farquhar (Ireland)
Bishop Crispian Hollis (England)
Bishop Lucius Ugorji (Nigeria)
The Revd Dr Peter Cross (Australia)
Sr Dr Donna Geernaert (Canada)
The Revd Don Bolen (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Co-Secretary)

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