

Sharing in The Apostolic Communion Interim Report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission 1993

INTRODUCTION

1. Appointed representatives of the world-wide Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council met in Jerusalem (March, 1992) and in Dublin, Ireland (April, 1993) to consider the common tradition shared by Methodists and Anglicans, and to consider ways the two churches might, in our time, forge new relationships that will signal greater unity and more effective Christian witness to the world.
2. Although the World Methodist Council was organized in 1881, and the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion has met since 1867, this is the first time an international Anglican-Methodist Commission has been established to focus on the Methodist-Anglican separation of more than 200 years. The Lambeth Conference, meeting at Canterbury in 1988, noted with regret that there was no international dialogue between us. The bishops recommended that steps be taken to begin such a dialogue, and the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council readily agreed.
3. This interim document is a first product of that dialogue. It reflects large areas of agreement between the two Communion, suggesting a growing together of Anglicans and Methodists in recent years. This document now being sent to the Provinces of the Anglican Communion and Methodist and United Churches belonging to the World Methodist Council seeks to test if there is sufficient agreement, in this description of Methodist-Anglican relationships, for our churches to engage themselves together more fully in faith, mission and sacramental life. It also seeks to locate issues that may remain as obstacles between us.
4. The concern that Christian believers be seen as one in Christ is urgent at this particular time. In the face of growing secularism in the older Christian world, while at the same time other religious faiths are in resurgence, the present Anglican-Methodist Dialogue is more than a matter of Christians talking to themselves about internal ecclesiastical arrangements. The integrity of Christian witness is at stake.
5. Christians believe there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Eph 4:5-6) Confessing this oneness together, to the highest achievable degree, is crucial for our evangelization, and may mitigate our disunity which now detracts from the presentation of the Gospel of reconciliation. We seek to be obedient to the will of Christ both in our confession of God's saving Word and in our witness to the One Lord of the Church and Savior of the world.
6. To this end, the present interim document of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission goes to the churches. The Churches of the Anglican Communion and the World Methodist Council are invited to make their comments, criticisms and suggestions for the sake of improving this text. A revised report will be presented to the World Methodist Council in Rio de Janeiro in 1996, and to the next Lambeth Conference.
7. The present text bears the following structure. The first main section describes "the present situation" (I). Then three sections correspond to the goal of full communion in "faith, mission and sacramental life": "faith and doctrine" (II), "mission and ministry" (III), "sacraments and the life of the Spirit" (IV). A fifth section indicates briefly "matters needing further work" (V). A sixth and final section offers some "interim proposals to enable our two Communion to grow in worship, mutual care and mission together" (VI).

8. At the very end of the following interim report, these questions will be put for response of the churches:
- In the context of, and for the purpose of, Anglicans and Methodists growing together, would your church be able to affirm the positive statements in this document (specifically paragraphs 16-19, 25-26, 39-48)?
 - Are there other obstacles that need to be removed, or further agreements made, before you could take the steps suggested in paragraphs 61-70, and other future steps in our growing together?
 - Do you accept the elements named in paragraph 9 as constitutive of full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life, or would you suggest or require others?

I. THE PRESENT SITUATION

9. With the historical memory of our separation and the perception of growing convergence, the Anglican and Methodist Communion have been encouraged to set out toward full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life. We recognise that we are called to full communion not only by practical considerations, but also by the very nature of our Gospel Faith, which calls us into communion with the Triune God and with one another (*koinonia*). The Scriptures portray the unity of the Church as a joyful communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, as well as communion among its members (1 Jn 1: 1-10; cf. 2 Cor 13: 14). Jesus prays that the disciples may be one as the Father is in him and he is in the Father, so that the world may believe (Jn 17, 21). By full communion we mean a necessary and sufficient measure of doctrinal agreement, eucharistic sharing, mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries, Christian fellowship and collaboration in evangelism and service.

10. Our history provides a strong foundation of shared faith on which to build. The history of God's people as recorded in Holy Scriptures and in the experience of the Church during the patristic, medieval, and reformation periods has formed us. While the exigencies and decisions of the 18th century separated Anglicans and Methodists, other factors, geographical, cultural and religious, kept us in a constant interaction. "Anglican" for example, at one time referred to the Church of England and its chaplaincies overseas. Now, however, it refers to more than thirty national and multi-national churches throughout the world, in communion with the see of Canterbury and each other. Similarly Methodism spread from England to Ireland, North America and the West Indies, and thence by missionary endeavours to many other parts of the world. Today 68 Methodist bodies are found witnessing in almost 100 countries. Methodists and Anglicans have contact with each other in most of these places, and while these contacts have often been positive, sometimes they have not. While each Communion has institutions and practices of its own, we have also shared together in the experience of the wider Christian community in recent times.

11. In Methodism, two historic Black Churches emerged as protests against acts of injustice, and another at its own request. As denominations, they have continued to share in the full life and work of the world-wide Church. A characteristic contribution has been their vibrant preaching and worship, and their intentional focus on social ministries.

12. On the common grounds of Faith and Baptism, Methodists and Anglicans already meet and recognise Christ in each other through personal relationships, common work in ecumenical councils, community ministries, joint worship and local ecumenical projects. In India and Pakistan, Anglicans and some Methodists have united in national churches. In a real sense, therefore, a degree of communion already exists between Anglicans and Methodists. It is this reality which we seek to expand and deepen between our two Communion.

13. Achieving full communion calls us to build on the God-given reality of variety and difference. Difference is not something we merely tolerate, it is our gift to each other for pleasure, for learning, for enrichment in the Faith. There are differences in doctrine and ethos between Anglicans and Methodists that might be mutually enriching but which hamper our present relationships. These need to be understood. Because we moved apart from a common milieu, both Anglicans and Methodists sought to justify positions, and in the process tended to caricature the other. Each took on characteristics and attitudes that need to be re-examined. In order to be reconciled with each other, our first task will be to reach a common understanding of our past with integrity, and affirm each other's contributions to the fullness of Christ's Church. In order to interact fully as people of God, we need to understand our differences and build on our positive diversity toward a common mission and life together in Christ.

14. We are beckoned by the Spirit to exercise a disciplined imagination as we seek to be faithful in the contexts we are given, to identify achievable goals and be swift to grasp opportunities to reach them. In all of this, the very nature of our world community demands that our thinking and acting be both local and global.

II. FAITH AND DOCTRINE

15. Doctrinal issues touch all areas of our churches' lives and inevitably affect all steps in the growing relationship between our two Communion. The following concerns engage attention: the central or core doctrines on which agreement is evident; the official doctrinal texts or standards in each communion's churches: the location of decision making on doctrinal matters in each communion's churches; the doctrinal emphases that may be considered characteristic of and particular to either family of Churches; our respective ecclesiologies, including our understandings of unity and the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of God; the ways in which our changing contexts and priorities necessitate and make possible a re-examination of doctrines that have been controversial between us.

Agreement in the Core of Doctrine

16. The following should be agreed as central or core doctrines that we share in common: we believe in God the eternal and undivided Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in the work of God as Creator of all that is; in the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and truly human; in the sanctifying and liberating work of the Holy Spirit. We recognise the fallenness of humankind and the need for redemption. We believe in the sufficiency of Christ's redemptive work; justification by grace through faith; the Church as the body of Christ; the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper as instituted by Christ; the final judgement; and the hope of eternal life in God's Kingdom.

17. We rejoice in the resolution of the Church of England General Synod, meeting at York in 1978, which declared that the Church of England required no further doctrinal assurances from the Methodist Church of Great Britain beyond those it had already received through the Methodist approval of the Anglican-Methodist plan of unity in 1969 and 1972.

18. In relation to agreement on central or core doctrines, it is important that we do not demand of each other a greater uniformity than we experience in our own separate communions.

Official Doctrinal Texts and Standards

19. The churches of our two Communion hold in common a number of official doctrinal texts and standards. We all affirm the sufficiency of the Scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation. We all affirm the beliefs contained in the Apostles' and Nicene-Constantinopolitan creeds. We all affirm the fundamental principles of the Reformation, to which the formularies of the 16th century--Homilies, Prayer Book and Articles--bear historic testimony. Both Anglicans and Methodists use the rites of the Book of Common Prayer as received and adapted by the various churches in the two communions. Our contemporary revisions of the liturgy all draw on commonly shared research in the context of the modern liturgical movement.

20. In addition to these texts held in common, Methodists are also guided in various ways by John Wesley's Standard Sermons, his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, and by the hymns of the Wesley brothers--all elements believed to be consonant with Scripture, with early Tradition and with the English Reformation. Similarly, Anglicans look to their prayer books, both to the Book of Common Prayer and to the prayer books currently authorized for use by the various provinces, for guidance in matters of faith and practice.

21. In addition, the historic Black Methodist Churches have drawn on the authenticity of the experiences of their respective Founders. The Founders either withdrew themselves from the Mother Church for reasons of racial discrimination or for the freedom of worshiping "under their own vine and fig tree".

22. When churches of our two Communion have become part of united churches in various lands, their doctrinal texts and standards have been received as an important part of the common tradition in the united churches.

The location of Doctrinal Decision Making

23. There are certain common features among the churches in the two Communion concerning the making of decisions on doctrinal matters. In Methodism the final authority in the interpretation of doctrine resides at the highest level of Conference in each particular denomination, with certain items being protected by restrictive clauses. For instance, the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church restricts its own right to "repeal or change the Articles of Religion, establish any new rules of doctrine, or alter any rule of Government to the effect of doing away with Episcopacy or General Superintendency" (AME **Discipline**). Anglicans also see doctrinal authority as residing in synodical procedures at the diocesan and provincial levels, with each diocese or province taking care to act in consultation with others. A special place is occupied, however, by the Bishops in doctrinal decisions in the Anglican communion, though the Bishop or Bishops almost always act in council on serious matters.

Characteristic Doctrinal Emphases

24. Certain doctrinal emphases have historically been perceived as characteristic of, and sometimes peculiar to, the two families of churches. It is important to ensure that these are correctly understood by the other family and to avoid the danger of caricature. Many Anglicans for example insist strongly upon the efficacy of grace in the sacraments, but this should not be seen as calling into question the fact that Methodists also hold the sacraments as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace”. Methodists, for their part, have preached a doctrine of Christian perfection, but this should not cast doubt on the fact that Anglicans also have pursued holiness of life.

The Church, its Unity, and the Kingdom of God

25. Concerning ecclesiology, neither Communion claims to be the whole Church, though each claims to be part of the Church catholic. All agree that certain elements and activities are essential to the being and life of the Church: perseverance in the teaching of the apostles, proclamation of the gospel to the world, faithful worship of God including the breaking of bread and common prayer (cf. Acts 2:42; 5:42). Both Anglicans and Methodists recognise that there are divisions in Christianity that run counter to the Gospel, compromising and damaging its proclamation and credibility. We each recognise that the restoration of unity, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is an urgent imperative laid upon us to bring us into greater conformity with Christ’s will for his Church and strengthen our witness to the world.

26. We can agree in seeing the living Church, Christ’s body, as the sign, instrument, and foretaste of God’s Kingdom: “The Church is sent into the world as sign, instrument and first-fruits of a reality which comes from beyond history--the Kingdom, as reign of God. The unity of the Church is not simply an end in itself because the Church does not exist for itself but for the glory of God and as a sign, instrument and first-fruits of his purpose to reconcile all things in heaven and earth through Christ. Nor is the unity of the Church merely a means to an end, for the Church already enjoys a foretaste of that end, and is only a sign and instrument in so far as it is a foretaste.. Life in Christ is the end for which all things were made, not a means to an end beyond it.” (**God’s Reign and Our Unity**, the Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission 1984 para. 29). We can also agree that our respective parts of the Church now are, and even our Churches if united will still be, incomplete, imperfect and provisional. We remain under the calling to become with all God’s people ever more fully the one holy catholic and apostolic Church until God’s final Kingdom should come.

Changing Contexts and Priorities

27. In the 20th century our changing contexts have affected our understanding of matters which divided us in the past and demand that we set about resolving the differences that have divided us. We note, first, the modern *ecumenical* movement, which was prompted by the need for united witness, especially on the mission field. In some places, Churches of our two Communions have already entered into unions, e.g., in South India, North India, and Pakistan; and in many other places there has been increasing cooperation in missionary endeavours. In the spirit of ecumenism, we look more for the things that unite us than for those that divide us.

28. Second, scholars of both Communions have contributed to our understanding of the *Bible and of Christian origins* in ways which have shed fresh light on ecumenical questions.

29. Third the modern *liturgical* movement has brought our Churches together in renewed understandings of worship on the basis of Scripture and the early Church and has enabled the revision of our liturgies along very similar lines. It has also fostered within our two Communions a common appreciation for different cultural styles and heritages in worship. Our two Communions participated in the “Lima process” from its very beginnings and most of our churches have made generally favourable responses to the text on “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”.

30. Fourth, churches in both our Communions have come to see the urgency of *evangelism* in a world of secularism and of the growth of populations who have never heard the gospel. It was the evangelistic zeal of the early Methodists which, in the historical circumstances, eventually contributed to our going separate ways; it would be appropriate if, in our time, a joint recovery of our evangelistic responsibilities helped towards the restoration of unity between us.

31. Fifth churches in both Communions have become increasingly aware of the everyday *needs of the world* and have already begun to find unity in joint service to people in distress; they have committed themselves in the causes of justice and peace.

III. MISSION AND MINISTRY

A. Mission

32. God's concern is for the whole world and he first chose the ancient people of Israel as the light to lead all peoples to the true light of his knowledge. Because of human failure to come to the light, preferring darkness rather than light, in mercy God sent his Son.

33. "As the Father sent me," said the crucified and risen Jesus, "so I send you", and he breathed on his disciples the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-23). Thus were the Apostles, as their title suggests, "sent out" as witnesses to the Easter faith. Since at that moment they also represented the entire Church (BEM, M10), the whole body of believers was thereby commissioned and empowered for mission in Christ's name and in his way.

34. Anglicans and Methodists have sought in history to be faithful to this missionary calling. Both share as their heritage the ancient evangelization of Britain by Celtic and Roman missionaries. The reformation brought a renewed grasp of the gospel. In the 18th century, the differing expressions of the evangelical revival among Anglicans included the call of the Methodist societies to "spread scriptural holiness over the land".

35. From both Churches arose extensive missionary enterprises in every part of the world. The fruit is that in both Communion, there are churches, especially in Asia and Africa, which are growing rapidly, and call us to new patterns and styles of worship, nurture and community, and face us with the challenge of bringing to contemporary situations "things both old and new". Our various approaches to mission have been partial, bound by time and culture, and yet blessed.

36. Anglicans and Methodists were also part of later revivals and awakenings in North America and elsewhere. Most recently, both Communion have been touched by contemporary movements of renewal in the Holy Spirit. Both face the failure of traditional structures and styles of life and worship to contain these and other movements, and both have experienced division and disunity as a result. We recognise our need to explore the way in which the Apostles, including Paul, understood their calling both as apostles and evangelists, and how contemporary churches are "sent" in continuity with the Church and the apostolic witness of all ages. As disciples of Christ, commissioned to participate in the faithful mission of the Church, we seek together to deepen our understanding of our calling to be Christ's witnesses.

37. Both Anglicans and Methodists have acknowledged that the Gospel calls us to confess Christ both in word and deed. John Wesley and William Wilberforce, for example, stood together in the movement to abolish slavery. In the same tradition, Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical missions made distinctive contributions among both rural and urban poor in many parts of the world. One recent statement, developed at the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1988, urges us to include in mission: Proclaiming the Gospel and enabling response; teaching, baptizing and nurturing new believers; response to human need by loving service; challenging and transforming unjust structures of society.

38. All of this leads us to recognise our need to articulate from our common experience a Trinitarian theology of mission so that we may witness together to the One God who calls us all into the mission of the Son for the sake of the whole world in the power of the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge that mission is both empowered by God's gift of unity within the Church and implements and makes visible the Church's unity for the world to see and believe. The unity of the Church, in the imperfect present and as promised by God, empowers the Church to be a prophetic sign of the Kingdom in all and each place.

B. Ministry

The Calling of the Whole People of God

39. Anglicans and Methodists begin their consideration of ministry at a common point: the calling of the whole people of God be engaged in the ministry and mission Jesus Christ to the world. In this calling, God the Spirit draws all people through Christ into a holy community which gives glory to God the Father. The call to mission is a call to common worship of the Triune God, to holiness of life, and to the conversion of the world, both the structures of society and individual human beings. The Church, while always need of reformation, is the first fruits of the unity which God desires for the whole creation. Thus the call to mission is also a call to penitence and unity.

40. Both Methodists and Anglicans recognise baptism as the sacrament of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection which calls us to participation in his mission in the world. "As the Father sent me", says the crucified and risen Jesus, "so I send you." (Jn20:21). The church is one, holy and catholic, and it is apostolic. The risen and ascended Christ continues his work now in constant intercession for the world and in drawing all people to reconciliation with God and with each other. All who believe are caught up into this priestly work of Christ, and called to maintain this apostolic task as the people of God. Thus "apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each" (BEM, M34).

The Calling of the Ordained Ministry

41. Anglicans and Methodists recognise that it is God who provides all that the Church needs for its work and worship. Every Christian has been given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "when he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people" (Eph 4: 7-8). God has not left the world without witnesses, and to this end calls men and women into particular ministries which equip the saints (Eph 4:12) for their apostolic task. Whereas in baptism the people of God are turned outwards towards the world where Christ leads us, in ordination some of the baptised are set apart to serve the Gospel within the Church itself, by the faithful preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments. Such ordained ministers are called to recall the people of God to their apostolic task, to lead and encourage them in it, pointing them to the God who guides and sustains them. John Wesley affirmed that "the end of all ecclesiastical order" is "to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build them up in his fear and love" (letter of 25 June 1746 to "John Smith").

42. "The Church ordains certain of its members for the ministry in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6)" (BEM M39). Our Churches ordain in the context of the worship assembly; this signifies that ordination is the act of the whole community, and it publicly claims the promises of Christ, "the risen Lord, who is the true ordainer and bestows the gift. In ordaining, the church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful proclamation of the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ" (BEM, M39). In the Anglican communion, bishops are always the ministers of ordination. In Methodism, where ordination is by authority of the Conference, Bishops or Presidents (or ex-Presidents) are always among those who ordain. The laying on of hands by those duly appointed is, at the same time, a sign of the Spirit's gift and "an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the ordinand to (their new mutual) relationship" (M44 (c)).

Historical Origins of the Ordained Ministry

43. Biblical scholars have in recent times called attention to the great variety of ways in which the early Church ordered its life for its apostolic work. Some of these reflect the patterns inherited from the Jewish community in Jerusalem or new communities developing in the Roman world. What is clear is that a three-fold form of Christian ministry emerged in God's providence to accomplish the permanent tasks of the Church. This ministry is to be seen as a single ministry, its basic oneness expressed in the service of word and sacrament. In the differentiated three-fold form it has existed, though with many changes and further developments, until today (see BEM M 19-21 and **The Niagara Report**, report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcopé 1987, paras. 41-55).

44. Other patterns of ministry exist which emerged in Christian history and which God has blessed. The Lima document says: "At some points of crisis in the history of the Church, the continuing functions of ministry were in some places and communities distributed according to structures other than the predominant three-fold pattern. Sometimes appeal was made to the New Testament in justification of these other patterns. In other cases the restructuring of ministry was held to lie within the competence of the Church as it adapted to changed circumstances" (BEM M19).

45. In Methodism, the first ministries were exercised by Anglican priests "in connexion with Mr. Wesley". A pattern of itinerant and local preachers developed, the latter being lay people with the requisite gifts for the care and nurture of the local societies. When ultimately a ministry for a Methodist Church appeared, it was not by reaction against Anglican forms, nor was appeal made to other "biblical patterns" such as presbyterian, or congregational: it developed to serve the needs of the growing church.

46. In those patterns that have emerged in the Methodist tradition as well as in the Anglican Communion, the intention has been to provide episcopé for the particular Christian community. Episcopé is a gift of the Holy Spirit and involves the maintenance and furtherance of the apostolicity, catholicity, unity and discipline of the Church; it is given

to nurture the Church's *koinonia*: "We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1: NRSV. The word 'fellowship' translates *koinonia*).

47. The three-fold ordering of the ministry as bishop, presbyter (elder, priest) and deacon is familiar to all Anglicans and to those Methodists whose tradition flows from Wesley's provisions for the Methodists in North America. In Britain and in churches elsewhere that have continued the British polity, the Conference exercises episcopé over the people called Methodists, with pastoral care being exercised beyond the local church through persons who bear varying titles (including Superintendent Minister, District Chair and even Bishop). Episcopé in these latter churches is primarily understood in corporate terms.

48. It is important to understand that, whatever the exigencies of history, departure from a three-fold or personal-episcopal form of ministry did not imply any less a commitment to the provision of faithful episcopé for the congregations of Christ's people. Whether a church claims an unbroken episcopal succession from apostolic times, or whether a church has formed a new pattern for itself out of its experience and particular need, its intention, we believe, has been to guarantee the faithful witness to the Gospel, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation and to which prophets and apostles bore the same witness in their day. We recognise in each other's Churches, within the Anglican and Methodist families, that intention being faithfully carried out in the faith and life and work of each Church. At the same time we acknowledge that, in both families, we have fallen short of the apostolic charge laid upon the people of God.

Episcopé as carried out in the Three-fold Ministry

49. Those Churches in our two Communion which have carried out episcopé by means of the three-fold order of bishops, presbyters (priests or elders) and deacons value this personal ministry in respect of episcopé as one sign of the apostolicity of the Church and of its succession from the commissioning of the earliest disciples by the risen Christ.

50. The Church is a sign, instrument and foretaste of God's Kingdom, and a means whereby Christ continues his saving work in the world. Because of their particular calling within Christ's Body the Church, ordained ministers are first and foremost and always servants of the people of God, as Jesus was in his earthly ministry. There is a priority of diaconia in all ordained ministry, whether that of bishop, presbyter or that of deacon itself.

51. There is, therefore, within ordained ministry an office of deacon in the Church, which sets forth the essential sign of Christ's work and purpose for the world (Mark 10:35-45). In both our Communion there is creative work in progress in discovering afresh how this servanthood is to be understood and practised. It has liturgical, pastoral and proclamatory aspects; it is to be exercised both within the body of believers and more broadly in the world. It is a distinctive and often life-long ministry. It is traditionally closely associated with the work of the bishop.

52. The bishop is seen as the focus of the exercise of episcopé as described above in paragraphs 46 and 49. Bishops do not exercise their ministry in isolation, either from the other ordained ministers or from the laity. They work in collaboration and consultation; as servants of the servants of God they never lose their participation in the diaconia of Christ. Their marks have been usefully set out for us in the Anglican-Methodist Ordinal drawn up for the English plan of union in 1968 and at that time approved by both churches: "A Bishop is called to be a Chief Minister and Chief Pastor and, with other Bishops, to be also a guardian of the faith, the unity, and the discipline which are common to the whole Church, and an overseer of her mission throughout the world. It is his duty to watch over and protect the congregations committed to his charge and therein to teach and to govern after the example of the Apostles the Lord. He is to lead and guide the Presbyters and Deacons under his care and to be faithful in ordaining and sending new ministers. A Bishop must, therefore, know people and be known by them; he must proclaim and interpret Christ's Gospel to them; and lead them offering of spiritual sacrifice and prayer. He must take care for the due ministering of God's Word and Sacraments; he must also be diligent in confirming the baptised and whenever it shall be required of him, in administering discipline according to God's holy Word" (**Anglican-Methodist Ordinal**, pp 30-31).

53. Just as the bishops have a special collaborative link with the deacons, so they share some of their responsibilities with the presbyters. In the early Church, presidency at the Eucharist was often a mark of the episcopate, but with the growth of the church, and the increasing need of the bishop to exercise responsibility for larger groupings of Christians, so presbyters would take up the role of presiding at the Eucharist of the church in one place, nurturing its life, and, in collaboration with the bishop, building guiding and guarding its order, life and faith. In all this the presbyters, too, should never lose their primary character as servants. Just as they support, serve and lead the whole people of God, together with the bishop and the deacons, so they in their turn are supported and held to their work by the whole people of God.

54. Anglicans continue to speak of presbyters as priests. As they use the language of ministerial priesthood, they recognise that they must distinguish this secondary and derivative language of priesthood both from the high priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of the people of God. The Anglican-Methodist Ordinal put it this way, "The royal priesthood which the whole Church has received from Christ her Lord, and in which each member of his Body shares, is exercised by the faithful in different ways. The distinctive Ministry is a special form of this participation. It is in this way that the priesthood of bishop and presbyter should be understood. The Ministry is thus a divinely appointed organ which acts in relation to the whole Body in the name of Christ and which represents the priestly service of the whole Body in its common worship. Ministers are, as the Methodist Statement on Ordination says, both Christ's ambassadors and the representatives of the whole people of God" (**Anglican- Methodist Ordinal**, p. 12).

The Ministry of Women

55. God's calling of women to serve the ministry in all its forms is accepted throughout Methodism.

56. In the Anglican Communion, women have been ordained as bishops, presbyters and deacons in recent years, though not universally, and not without substantial differences of opinion and some variety of practice. The Anglican Communion is still exploring the effects of these decisions made in some of its provinces on its own unity as a Communion.

Formal lay Ministries

57. The ministry of lay people is primarily in the world. The ministry of the ordained is primarily to the laity. In the same broad way in which ordained ministers (as baptised persons) also live and witness in the world, so many lay people offer their gifts within the work of the Church with equal commitment and in responsible roles like those of the ordained. This is to be welcomed as signs of the Spirit's abundant work. In the experience of our Churches, and especially in Methodism, lay people have had the role of pioneers and preachers in the founding of churches.

58. All lay people have their proper roles in life, governance and work of the church today. Some lay people are called to share in various major responsibilities in the institution alongside ordained ministries. Lay readers, catechists, local preachers and pastors, class leaders, musicians and other such leaders give their time and talents generously in local congregations and other levels of church work. We affirm their work and acknowledge its value in the total ministry of the Church.

Episcopé in Anglicanism and Methodism since the 18th Century

59. While John Wesley lived, the Methodist people remained a society within the Church of England, attending worship and receiving the sacraments at Anglican hands. At the same time that Wesley insisted on this loyalty to Anglican ways, he found his hand forced by the needs of his societies in America and elsewhere to provide for the faithful preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments. Believing himself a "scriptural episcopos", and acting in an emergency situation, he ordained on that basis a "General Superintendent" for the American church to provide there the same kind of oversight that he was able to provide in England. In the American church, the superintendent came to be known as bishop. This title did not imply any claim to historic succession in the way that many Anglicans have understood it.

60. In England, Wesley made provision however for a continuance of the Societies after his death through the episcopé of the "Legal Hundred", which in turn became the Conference as we know it today. For over forty years, the main Wesleyan body on the whole avoided actions which would prejudice a living relationship with the Church of England. One mark of this was the cessation of presbyteral ordination from 1797 to 1836. In the latter year, the Wesleyans accepted the necessity to act separately as a church, and provided carefully for their future. This was in part a response to a more exclusive understanding of church and ministry which arose from the Oxford Movement in the mid-19th century. Anglicans and Methodists began to define themselves as churches over against each other's claims, which made mutual acceptance very difficult. In recent decades, we have learned to see each other as churches in a different perspective. In the Methodist family, whether episcopal or not, the churches have enjoyed complete acceptance of each other as churches, including full communion and mutual interchangeability of ministries.

The Present Convergence of our Communion and the Historic Episcopate

61. We have already spoken of the new situation which has been developing in the past decades bringing our two communions closer together in a number of very important ways (see above, paragraphs 27-31).

62. This growing convergence means, amongst other things, that old contrasts between episcopal churches, themselves

with different understandings of episcopacy, and churches with non-episcopal polities, might be viewed in a broader perspective, namely, the perspective of common loyalty to the apostolic faith, and obedience to and trust in the faithfulness of God who does not leave the world without witnesses. As Anglicans and Methodists we in the Commission, like many in our Communion, have come to view the histories of our respective communions, including our separation from one another, in this light, and therefore regard the time as right to move toward full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life with each other.

63. At the same time, we welcome the statement in BEM that the historic episcopate is “a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the church” (M38). And, having in mind the resolution of the Church of England General Synod of 1978 (referred to in paragraph 17 above), we recall with equal gratitude the decision of the British Methodist Conference in 1981 to be ready to receive the historic episcopate into its life and ministry, recalling what those who proposed this step said in relation to it: “There are times when someone has to take the initiative. This is especially true in the healing of broken relationships. We believe that this is such a moment in the growing together of Christians and the Christian Churches. The Methodist Church is perhaps uniquely fitted to take a step that would be a sign of our faith in the future of the Church and a help to others. We use the word sign in two senses: as an indication of what we think the Church of the future will be like and as an act or symbolic gesture which will help towards a future that never seems to come nearer.”

64. While the expression of penitence by both Methodists and Anglicans for our separation and continuing division is a necessary and rightful step in the restoration of the unity which Christ desires for his Church, and for which we long, the Anglican members of our Commission in particular wish to confess our penitence for the fact that, along with other examples of the maintenance of division in the Anglican communion, the Church of England was unable to respond positively to the covenant proposals which were before the churches in Britain at the time of that resolution of the British Methodist Conference.

65. The whole Commission recognises that the historic succession of bishops from the earliest times raises important questions which need to be addressed by our two Communion as they move towards full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life.

66. In this context we reiterate the fundamental statement made in paragraph 40 above, and expressed clearly in the Lima document and in the statements of various bilateral conversations made by our two Communion, that the apostolic commissioning by the risen Christ was to the people of God as a whole. It is the Church as the whole people of God which is apostolic.

67. We also re-affirm the centrality of ongoing mission to the world as the charge laid upon the Church by Christ, a mission to which he calls us afresh in every generation. The Anglicans in our commission recognise the development of Methodism in the 18th and 19th centuries as being carried out in faithful response to that charge of the risen Christ, and recognise the central importance of the apostolic practice of mission and evangelism in the life and work the Methodist people, from those days until now. Equally, the Methodists in our commission recognise the authenticity and reality of the Anglican Communion’s commitment to mission and evangelism as demonstrated e.g. by the historic missionary societies, the work of Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical parishes in urban areas, and most recently the Decade of Evangelism.

68. In this document we have also set out the substantial agreement there is between us on matters of faith, doctrine, and life in Christ, and on the basis of this we believe we are in a position to move towards full recognition of the apostolicity of each other’s churches.

69. We believe this should include the recognition of the apostolicity of each other’s ministry and allow us to work towards the establishment of that ministry in its traditional three-fold form, including, in ways which still need to be worked out, the historic episcopate.

70. We see the historic episcopate as one sign of the continuity, unity, and catholicity of the church. We look forward to entering into full communion with one another in faith, mission and sacramental life and to the historic episcopate becoming again, for all of us, one element in the way by which the ordained ministry is transmitted with due order. John Wesley himself was concerned with this matter. We recognise that this process will be perceived differently by those Methodist Churches which have had a personal episcopal ministry within Conference for 200 years, and those whose episcopal oversight has been carried out through Conference itself. We recognise that we have many gifts to share with each other within the apostolicity of the Church including the historic episcopate and corporate or conciliar episcopé. But we are quite clear, in the light of all our work, and the whole of this report, that this must be done in such

a way as not to call into question the ordination or apostolicity of any of those ordained as Methodist or Anglican ministers according to the due order of their churches.

IV. SACRAMENTS AND THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

71. Methodists and Anglicans share a common belief that the Christian life is faith working through love (Galatians 5:6). As we look together at the developing of our life as members of the body of Christ, certain key issues emerge in connection with the life of the Spirit and its sacramental expressions.

72. Anglican and Methodist churches alike practice the baptism of infants, children and adults. However, we find ourselves facing common problems: the need to ensure the growth in faith of children in our midst; to find ways of affirming and deepening the faith declared in baptism—in personal commitment, in confirmation, and in regular times of re-commitment such as the Easter Vigil or the Covenant Service; to develop means for the nurture of personal holiness and service to others.

73. In traditionally Christian nations, fewer are brought to baptism as infants in both Communion. Both Communion are active in countries with little or no Christian belief or culture. In the present missionary situation that obtains in all countries, both Anglicans and Methodists are challenged to order church life and liturgy so that adults may come to faith, and find ways of marking their continuing spiritual journey once they have been baptised.

74. Anglicans historically have found a unity in worship through a Book of Common Prayer. Methodists also have drawn on this heritage, but have modified it in their own situations, especially in the use of extempore prayer and hymnody. There have been differences of emphasis, but our common search for a living spirituality has challenged us to rediscover the deep sources of our own heritage, to use them creatively, and to receive with gratitude the riches and wisdom of the wider Church.

75. For both Methodists and Anglicans, worship is at the heart of our Christian vocation. As churches, we are wrestling with the character and quality of the liturgy of Word and Sacrament at the heart of the Church's life and the norm for Sunday worship: "The Eucharist, which always includes both word and sacrament, is a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God...Its celebration continues as the central act of the Church's worship (BEM E 3 & 1). In practice, for most Methodists and many Anglicans, the preaching of the Word is the primary focus of Sunday worship. For many other Anglicans and a growing number of Methodists, the Eucharist, with biblically-centered preaching, is the ordinary Sunday worship.

76. Churches in both the Anglican and Methodist Communion have expressed great appreciation for the section on the Lord's Supper in the Lima text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.¹ That document may therefore usefully serve as a basis for agreement and renewal. It declares that Eucharist is essentially the Sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit" (E2). It expounds the meaning of the Eucharist as "thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the Faithful, and meal of the Kingdom" (E2-26). According to Lima, "the Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the Eucharist While Christ's real presence in the Eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required... Christian faith is deepened by the celebration of the Lord's Supper". (E13;30)²

V. MATTERS NEEDING FURTHER WORK

¹ See *Churches Respond to BEM*, six volumes, Geneva: WCC, 1986-88. 01 the section on the eucharist, the Church of Ireland notes that "drawing its inspiration from recent biblical, patristic and liturgical scholarship, it is eirenic in its approach and successfully transcends the old divisive controversies" (I, 65). The United Methodist Church judges that it "encourages our generation of Methodists to recover our own Wesleyan heritage while experiencing the theological convergence with many other Christians" (II, 190). The Church of England (III, 49) and the Uniting Church in Australia (IV, 157) agree in recognizing in the Lima text "the faith of the Church through the ages". The Scottish Episcopal Church finds in the text "sufficient agreement, in eucharistic faith and practice, for unity" (II, 49).

² The matters of the disposal of elements remaining after the communion service on the one hand, and of the extra-liturgical uses of the sacrament on the other, have been sensitive issues between Anglicans and Methodists. We note that BEM recommends that in regard to the practice of reserving the elements, "each church should respect the practices and piety of the others", while declaring that "the best way of showing respect for the elements served in the Eucharist celebration is by their consumption, without excluding their use for communion of the sick." (E32)

77. The Commission recognises that it has further work to do. At a meeting in 1995 it will consider the comments, criticisms and suggestions it has solicited and will prepare a revised report. The following matters need more attention than we have been able to give them:

- a. The Ministry of the Laity: We recognise that the ministry of the laity has discovered new power and authority in our day. This area needs to be explored further in the Commission and in our Communion.
- b. Apostolicity and Episcopé: The Commission needs to explore whether apostolicity and episcopacy are understood and practiced differently in our two Communion in different parts of the world.
 - Are there ways in which Anglicans could regard Methodist episcopacy as accommodated by the formulation of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1886) (“The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church”)?
- c. The Diaconate: In the light of current thinking about ministry, especially on diaconal ministry, we need to discuss whether there are differences between our churches, and/or ways in which we may be mutually helped by common considerations and new insights.
- d. Relation of Ministries to Each Other: The Commission would be helped in its preparation of a final text if it was advised (1) how our two families use words such as: presbyter, pastor, elder, priest, minister, deacon and deaconess; and (2) how local/parochial/itinerant/circuit ministries relate to each other and to district/diocesan levels, and universally.

VI. INTERIM PROPOSALS TO ENABLE OUR TWO COMMUNIONS TO GROW IN WORSHIP, MUTUAL CARE AND MISSION TOGETHER.

78. As a basis for our growth towards full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life, together we affirm that:

- Both of us belong to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Jesus Christ and participate in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.
- In all of our churches the Word of God is authentically preached and the Sacraments instituted by Christ are duly administered.
- All our churches share in the common confession of that apostolic faith.

79. During this interim period of growing together as Communion, prayer, study, and common endeavour are essential. We offer the following as examples from a rich range of possible actions:

a) Worship

- i) Joint worship on such significant occasions for our traditions as Aldersgate Sunday, Richard Allen Day (AME), James Varrick Day (AMEZ), All Saints’ Day, Covenant Service, Easter Vigil, Patronal Festivals, and other local observances.
- ii) Mutual eucharistic hospitality, whereby members in good standing of each Communion are welcomed to receive at the Lord’s table in the Communion of the other.
- iii) Mutual invitations to attend and participate where possible in ordinations and consecrations.

b) Study and Discussion

- i) Promotion of opportunity for ecumenical studies in formal and informal gatherings. Joint courses might be offered in theological schools, continuing education, and lay training programs. Such courses might include mission, evangelism, worship, and social ethics. Study in shared living situations are to be encouraged.
- ii) Joint study or discussion groups on a parish or regional basis may gather to tell our stories and to share our experience of life in the Spirit. Groups might have a specific timetable or goal (eg. meeting during Lent, or focusing on a Christian approach to such issues as peace, justice and the environment).

c) Co-operation

i) We encourage the formation of a contact group or joint committee between each national church in the two communions. This contact group might suggest specific ways in which members of the other Communion could participate in decision making groups on a national and regional level. The national contact group will gather preliminary reports at the end of each year to convey to the Anglican Consultative Council and to the World Methodist Council.

ii) Each Anglican parish and Methodist church in an area might co-operate in one common project, either continuing or annual (eg. day-school, evangelistic campaign, homeless shelter).

iii) We encourage the creation of new Anglican-Methodist long term co-operative projects in mission, evangelism and pastoral care at the local level and the encouragement of existing projects and covenants such as Local Ecumenical Projects in England, or local covenants in the USA.

CONCLUSION

80. The Commission respectfully asks the churches of the two Communions to answer the following questions:

- **In the context of, and for the purpose of, Anglicans and Methodists growing together, would your church be able to affirm the positive statements in this document (specifically paragraphs 16-19, 25-26, 39-48)?**
- **Are there other obstacles that need to be removed, or further agreements made, before you could take the steps suggested in paragraphs 61-70, and other future steps in our growing together?**
- **Do you accept the elements named in paragraph 9 as constitutive of full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life, or would you suggest or require others?**

In order to assist the Commission in improving this text, please send all responses by July 1, 1995 to each of the following addresses:

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