

C H U R C H A N D C O M M U N I O N

VENICE DRAFT

I	1 - 7	INTRODUCTION
II	8 - 13	COMMUNION UNFOLDED IN SCRIPTURE
III	14 - 18	IMAGES OF COMMUNION
IV	19 - 27	COMMUNION - SACRAMENTALITY AND THE CHURCH
V	28 - 31	COMMUNION - APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND THE CHURCH
VI	32 - 36	COMMUNION - CATHOLICITY AND UNITY
VII	37 - 40	UNITY AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNION
VIII	41 -	COMMUNION BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

INTRODUCTION

1. In the midst of all its struggles, humanity knows that it needs love, justice and peace. By the grace and salvation given in Jesus Christ the world is offered the fulfilment of these hopes. Humanity needs God. Those who do not yet know the living God stand in need of reconciliation and renewed relationship with their Creator and each other. Those who have heard and received the Gospel are invited into ever deeper relationship with God through Christ; they continue to need the renewal of their reconciliation with God and with their neighbours, and they are called to uphold and serve the dignity and freedom of every human being. To speak of communion is to address the world at the heart of its greatest need.
2. The gift of communion is nothing less than a sharing in the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, entailing our reconciliation with God and with one another in the divine life of love. Communion therefore provides the context within which we propose to discuss more fully our common understanding of the design of God for his Church.
3. We are conscious that the prevailing mood of contemporary society is indifferent to, uncomprehending of, and even hostile towards the claim that the Church can serve the real needs of human beings and their world. The religions of the world are often accused of exacerbating conflict through their divisions and intolerance. Christians are criticised for their inability to be reconciled amongst themselves. This alienation challenges us to uphold and affirm the intention for which God called us together: to bring to men and women the Good News of God's love and purpose for humanity revealed in Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel with which we are entrusted.
4. In proclaiming this Gospel the vocation of the Church is to bear the marks of the crucified one, rejected and pushed to the margin, serving by giving a greater proof of love. We who as God's Church are charged with

the privilege and responsibility of bringing the Gospel to our world must ourselves stand penitent and humbled before the truth of the Gospel. We must proclaim the reconciliation and communion with God that is the final destiny of the whole creation; our common life in this mystery must provide for the world a foretaste of the final kingdom inaugurated by Christ.

5. The understanding of the Church as communion, therefore, brings with it profound challenges not only to Anglicans and Roman Catholics but also to all Christians. We acknowledge that, within the wider ecumenical movement, many besides ourselves are taking up this theme. For those who are scandalized by our divisions, the Gospel we proclaim is hard to hear and the message of God's gift of communion obscured. Yet humbly and thankfully we affirm that it is the Church on earth which has been chosen by God and empowered by the Spirit as his instrument of reconciliation in Christ.

6. Together with other Christians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are committed to the search for that unity in truth for which Christ prayed. Within this context, the purpose of ARCIC is to examine and try to resolve those doctrinal differences which hinder communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The Final Report of ARCIC-I and the publication of ARCIC-II's statement on Salvation and the Church have contributed to progress in mutual understanding and in growing awareness of the need for full ecclesial communion. We believe it is time now to reflect more explicitly upon the nature of communion and its constitutive elements, so that we may recognise the degree of communion that exists both within and between our two Churches.

Moreover we believe that within the perspective of communion the outstanding difficulties between us will be most clearly understood and most likely to be resolved. Furthermore we hope that our reflections on communion will help to meet requests to clarify the Commission's understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church.

7. After a brief survey of the biblical idea of communion and the relation of this concept to an understanding of the Church, we explore the way the Church is at the same time sign and instrument of the merciful grace of God. Then we examine the way in which the Church of today remains in communion with the Church of the apostles. Next we see how the one and indivisible Church exists in local churches rooted in the variety of cultures, geographical situations and historical conditions. We then consider some of the elements required for the full and visible unity of the Church. Finally we examine the existing communion between our two Churches and outline some of the remaining issues which continue to divide us.

II. COMMUNION UNFOLDED IN SCRIPTURE

8. The drama of humanity, as expounded in Scripture, is of the formation, breakdown and renewal of relationships. Thus in Genesis Adam and Eve are presented as being created to find fulfillment in communion with each other and with God. Their disobedience undermines both their relationship with God and their relationship with each other: they hide from God; Adam blames Eve; they are excluded from the garden; their relationship with the rest of creation is distorted: the unfolding narrative in Genesis indicates that this is the way of all humanity.

9. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments bear witness that, in faithfulness to his eternal purpose, God continues to will the salvation of humankind and the restoration of creation. The divine purpose is re-affirmed in covenants with his people. Through Abraham God gives the promise of blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:1-3). Through Moses God establishes a people as his own possession, a community in a covenant relationship with him (Exodus 19:5ff.). The prophets consistently denounce the community's faithlessness as threatening this relationship. Nevertheless, God's fidelity remains constant and he promises through the prophets that his purpose will be accomplished. Although division and exile follow upon the failures of the chosen people, reconciliation of the scattered people of God will spring from a radical transformation within a new covenant (Jer. 31:31). God will raise up a servant to fulfil his purpose of communion and peace for all the nations (Isaiah 49:6; cf also Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 2:10-13).

10. In the fullness of time, God sends his Son, born of a woman, to redeem his people and bring them into a new relationship as his adopted children (cf Gal. 4:4). When Jesus begins his ministry he calls together

his mission,
a band of disciples with whom he shares the mission entrusted to him by his Father (Jn. 20:21). In the light of Easter they are to be witnesses to his life and teaching, death and resurrection. In the power of the Spirit given at Pentecost they proclaim that God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ. By a baptism of repentance and faith believers are brought into communion with God and one another (Acts 2 esp. vv. 38, 42). The baptism bestowed in this New Covenant does more than restore that which was lost: by the Spirit believers enter Christ's own communion with the Father (cf Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). It is this gift of communion which constitutes the people of the New Covenant, which is the Church.

11. Through the victory of the Cross all estrangement occasioned by differences of culture, race, class, privilege and sex is to be overcome. In Christ all have equal standing before God (Galatians 3:27-29; Colossians 3:11). Moreover, because Christ is the one in whom and through whom all things are created and reconciled, the proper relationship between humanity and the rest of creation is restored and renewed in him (Colossians 1:15-20).
12. However, from New Testament times to the present era the communion was constantly weakened by human sin. The failure of Christians to respond to the evangelical demands of love and justice, truth and holiness, impaired the life of communion, and led to divisions among Christians obscuring the Church's witness.
13. Despite these divisions the Scriptures speak of an authentic participation in the Kingdom here and now (Mark 1:15; Luke 11:20), to be perfectly realized only in the fulness of the Kingdom of God. Its culmination is described as a feast, 'the wedding supper of the Lamb', a vivid image of communion deeply rooted in human experience (Luke 22:30; Rev. 19:9; cf Is. 25:6). This feast is spoken of by

Jesus in the parables and foreshadowed in the feeding of the multitudes. The celebration of the Eucharist prefigures and provides a true foretaste of this messianic banquet. In the world to come, such signs will cease since the sacramental order will no longer be needed, for God will be immediately present to his people. They will see him face to face and join in endless praise (Revelation 22: 3-4). This will be the perfection of communion. Thus the communion of human beings with God, with one another, and with the whole creation has an eschatological dimension.

III. IMAGES OF COMMUNION *

14. In the New Testament the general idea of communion is conveyed in many ways. A variety of words, expressions and images point to its reality. More than any other concept, communion illuminates the reality to which this variety of images and language refer: the people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10), flock (John 10:14; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:3, 4); body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27); vine (John 15:5); temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17); bride (Revelation 21:2). All of these imply relationships with Christ or with God; some of them, such as flock and body, also imply a relationship between the members of the community.

15. In the New Testament the Greek word koinonia (often translated 'communion' or 'fellowship') is the one which most aptly describes these relationships. Although the word, together with its cognates, is not always used in the New Testament with precisely the same connotations, it often signifies relationship based on participation (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:16), and so it has come to be recognized as the most expressive term to describe our relationship with God and with one another through Christ in the Spirit. This usage is explicit and most distinctive in the Johannine writings: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3; cf 1 John 1:7).

16. Communion is the profound all-embracing reality of a shared life in Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-21; cf John 17) of which no one model or image is an exhaustive description. Communion is the participation in the life of God through the Holy Spirit which makes Christians

* either here or incorporated after para. 12.

one with Christ and one with each other. Because it comprises those who enjoy this communion with God and with one another, the Church is rightly described as communion.

17. Every account of the Church as communion necessarily implies a fundamental relationship to Christ. He is the leader of God's people, the shepherd of the flock, the head of the body, the cornerstone of the temple, the heavenly bridegroom, the vine. Similarly it is characteristic of the apostle Paul to speak of the relationship of believers to their Lord as being 'in Christ' (Romans 8:1; Col. 1:28; 2 Cor. 5:17). He also speaks of Christ as being in the believer (Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:28; Col. 1:27). Through this relation to Christ the Church exists as a fruit of saving grace and also as an instrument of God for the realization of his purpose.

18. In accordance with New Testament usage, communion also denotes participation in the Lord's Supper, which is the focus of the Church's communion (1 Cor. 10:16-17). This New Testament use of the word, however, transcends and points beyond the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, and expresses the unity that stems from the relationship that Christians enjoy in Christ with God and with one another, which will reach its fulfilment when God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). It is the will of God for the whole of his creation, that all things should be brought to ultimate unity in Christ (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:19-20); the Church is sign, instrument and foretaste of that communion and oneness of God's Kingdom. Consequently, communion means far more than an institutional or juridical relationship between Christian communities; it is the word which most aptly expresses the fundamental nature of the Church.

IV COMMUNION - SACRAMENTALITY AND THE CHURCH

19. God's purpose is to bring the whole of creation into communion with himself. ⁽¹⁾ To accomplish this the Eternal Word became incarnate. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ definitively manifested the restored humanity that God intends. By what he was, by what he taught, and by what he accomplished through the cross and resurrection, he became both sign and instrument of the realization of God's purpose for the whole of creation. The risen Christ as the new Adam, the source of life in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45), is the beginning and guarantor of this transformation. Through this transformation the bitterest alienations of humanity are superseded by a profound communion, not only between human beings but supremely between them and God. ⁽²⁾ These two dimensions of communion are inseparable. This is the mystery of Christ (Romans 16:25-26; Gal. 3:2-11). In the design of God the harmony and love that he desires between individuals and communities, races and cultures, must be rooted in this communion with God and sustained and fostered by it.

20. Human relationships in their frailty are always under threat. God in his mercy continues through the work of the Holy Spirit to make available the means of grace whereby communion can be restored, maintained and nourished. In Christ the new Adam, the responsibility and dignity of human kind, made in the image of God, have been restored and are constantly being renewed by the Spirit. That part of humanity which through faith acknowledges and accepts the gift of God's grace is joined with Christ in the manifestation and extension of this communion. The Church is this community of faith, incorporated into Christ through baptism, that has become his Body, "the fulness of him who fills the whole creation" (Eph. 1:23). It is empowered by his Spirit to make present for all time the incomparable riches of God's grace. The Church can therefore be described as "sacrament", the sign of our communion with God and with one another, and the instrument by which he accomplishes this communion.

21. The Church as Sign

The Church as communion of believers with God and with each other is a sign of the new humanity that God is creating and a pledge of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. Its vocation is to embody and reveal the redemptive power of the Gospel, signifying the offer of forgiveness received through faith and the gift of sharing the new life in Christ. Those who are baptized devote themselves to "the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship (koinonia), to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42), and also to the proclamation of the gospel (cf. Acts 8:4). They become one heart and soul. They serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13). Their sharing of material resources is a true dimension of their communion within the life of Christ (Romans 15:26-27). Because Christ overcame all the barriers of division created by human sin, the Christian community has entered into the struggle to end those divisions (cf. Ephesians 2:14-18, 5:1,2).

22. The Church is thus far more than a voluntary coming together of justified individuals, for in it Christ is ever present and acting through the Spirit. It is the community where the redemptive work of Jesus Christ has been (3) appropriated and is being revealed to the world. Whenever the Church faces opposition and persecution for the sake of Christ, it becomes a sign of the wisdom and the folly of the Cross.)

The Church is the sign of what God has done in Christ, is continuing to do for those who serve him, and wills to do for all humanity. It is the sign of God's abiding presence, the pledge of his eternal faithfulness to his promises, till God be all in all.

23. The Church as Instrument

In St. Matthew's Gospel the risen Christ leaves his followers with the promise of his continual presence and the command to make disciples of all nations (28:19-20). Since the ascension of Christ the Church has been entrusted with the responsibility to be the servant of God for growth in grace and the spread of salvation through the power of Christ's presence assured by the Spirit.⁽⁴⁾ Through the Church's ministry of the Word, God proclaims the good news of salvation once for all achieved by Christ and of the call to communion with Christ.⁽⁵⁾ In the Church's celebration of the sacraments God the Father bestows the riches of shared life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Moreover, in the commitment of the members of the Church to the world's needs, Christ is present, continuing and extending his ministry to the end of time. Thus, as the instrument of God's purpose, 'the Church is called to be a living expression of the Gospel, evangelized and evangelizing, reconciled and reconciling, gathered together and gathering others. In its ministry to the world the Church seeks to share with all people the grace by which its own life is created and sustained' (Salvation and the Church, 28).

24. It is only through the reception of God's grace that the Church is empowered to become this active instrument of that grace. Therefore the affirmation that the Church is instrument of salvation does not mean that it is in any way independent of Christ nor that it can add anything to the grace of God.

25. In Christ the service of God always involves suffering. In all the suffering of the members of the Church for God's glory, Christ himself, the Saviour of the world, is present. What Paul says of himself is true for all: "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). Thus the sufferings and anguish of the Church are not only an instrument of sanctification for its own members; they are also instruments of God for the evangelisation of the world. To be the Church is to share sacrificially in partnership (koinonia) in the Gospel (Phil. 1:5).

26. Thus the Church, through its communion with God and its common life in the Spirit, is both sign and instrument, that is, the visible manifestation of the mysterious gift of the Kingdom as well as the means utilised by God for the fulfilment of his Kingdom. By its common life the Church is the sign of this Kingdom. By the preaching of the word, through the celebration of the sacraments, the work of intercession, the ministry of pastoral care, the witness of all the faithful and their involvement in evangelisation, the Church is the ^{sign of the Kingdom and the} instrument for the spread of that Kingdom. Consequently when we speak of the Church as 'sacrament', we mean that its very existence is both sign of the mystery of Christ and instrument of his Spirit.

27. The mandate of God given to Christ to bring salvation to all the nations of the earth constitutes the unique mission of the Church. By God's gift of the same Spirit who was at work in the earthly ministry of Jesus the Church shares in attaining the goal of Christ's mission.

(6)
27A. To be in communion with Christ in his continuing ministry for the salvation of the world is to share his will that the Father be glorified (Cp. Colossians 1:24). The will of Christ that his Church be one is not only for the credibility of the Church's witness and for the effectiveness of its mission, It is for the glorification of the Father, God's reconciling work is made strikingly manifest . . . when believers in all their diversity are united in the communion of the Church. This ^{communion} is a pledge here and now of the ultimate fulfilment of God's design for all humanity as proclaimed in the Book of Revelation.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lord, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen." (Rev. 7:9-12)

Therefore every successful endeavour upon earth to promote and enhance communion advances the kingdom of God and gives glory to the Father through his Son in the Holy Spirit.

V. COMMUNION - APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND THE CHURCH

28. The Church of God is built on the proclamation and confession of faith. The content and object of this faith is the truth of Jesus Christ to which the apostolic community bore witness by its life and teaching.

By recognizing the canon of Scripture as the normative record of the revelation of God, the Church sealed its acceptance of the memory of the apostolic community. This gift of divine truth is inseparable from the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church to sustain the vital memory of the teaching, work and exaltation of Christ. Through the Spirit of Christ this tradition is a living reality in the Church, celebrated in word and sacrament. Accordingly, in the eucharistic memorial the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, the Scriptures have always been read.

This memory of Christ, realized in every age and culture, constitutes the living apostolic tradition of the Church. This living tradition propagates and elicits faith where no faith was. The apostolic tradition is necessarily fundamental to the communion which spans time and place, linking us to past and future generations of Christians.

29. The living memory of Christ is to be found within the whole ecclesial community and is made present in its constant confession and celebration of the apostolic faith. As the social setting of the Christian community changes, so the questions it has to face both from within and without constantly change. Even within the New Testament new images and language are used to express the faith as it is handed on in new cultural contexts. For the Church to ^{retain} faithful, rooted and grounded in the truth, it must develop new expressions

of the faith in conformity with the tradition it has received from the apostles. Within this living process individuals and groups play their part. Their insights have to be tested and integrated into the life and faith of the whole Church.

30. This faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3) is lived out in an ever-changing variety of time, place and culture. Diversity of culture will also elicit a proper diversity in the faithful expression of the one Gospel. Within the same community differences of perception and practice in complex matters call for right discernment of the faith. Tensions inevitably appear: they may be creative of healthy development. They can also cause a loss of continuity with apostolic tradition, estrangement from other parts of the Church and disruption within the community. There has always been conflict in the Church. Whenever differences become embodied in separated ecclesial communities, so that Christians are no longer able to receive, celebrate and pass on the truth within one community of faith, all are impoverished and the living memory of the Church becomes obscured. As Christians grow apart, some complementary aspects of the one truth may be perceived as mutually incompatible. Although the unity and peace of the Church are constantly under threat, the Church is sustained by Christ's promise of its perseverance in the truth (cf Matt. 16:18). This promise is fulfilled in the action of the Holy Spirit who maintains the living memory of Christ among his people (cf John 14:26).

31. The obligation to preach the apostolic faith, to explain and apply its message is a primary function of the ordained ministry. Part of the responsibility of the ministry is to nurture and keep the people of God in their obedience to the apostolic faith. Just as the living memory of the Church is fostered by the Holy Spirit within the whole people of God, individual Christians and groups are guided by the same Spirit. The task of the ordained ministry includes listening and discerning in order to assist the people of God in the articulation of their faith and to give authoritative expression to it. Ordained ministers are part of the community, sharing its search for understanding the truth of the Gospel. The community for its part must respond to and assess the insights and teachings of the ordained ministry. Thus there is a continuing process of discernment and response. The succession of the ordained ministry is intended to assure the community that its faith is indeed the faith of the Church through the ages. The ordained ministry also serves to make the Universal Church aware of the perceptions and circumstances of the local churches, helping the local churches to maintain their place within the universal communion.

VI COMMUNION - CATHOLICITY AND UNITY

32. The unity of the Church is grounded in God's gift of himself.

Because there is only one Lord, there can only be one faith and one baptism. This unity will necessarily be realised in the rich diversity of the human race that God has created and now redeems. To speak of communion is to speak of a unity that requires and presupposes differences. Therefore diversity must always be a characteristic of the Church. It reflects the prodigal generosity of God the creator, which finds its fullest expression in the mystery of salvation.

33. This diversity is apparent in the life both of individuals and communities. Communities vary in their ways of understanding and response as a result of cultural and geographical factors. Individuals, too, differ from one another in their temperamental and vocational endowments. St. Paul has the individual especially in mind when he writes (1 Cor. 12) of the Church as a body with a variety of members. But Christian communities, too, complement one another with their varied gifts and resources, spiritual and material. This has been evident, among other ways, in the variety of liturgies and forms of spirituality, of disciplines and ways of exercising authority, of theological approaches and forms of doctrinal expression which has always characterised the Church. These diversities are not in themselves divisive.

34. Division occurs only when diversities appear to contradict or obscure the unity of the faith on which the Church is grounded, or the integrity of the life which expresses it.

These experiences may be real, or they may arise from misunderstanding

The apostolic tradition is normative for the whole Church; and where there is rejection or distortion of its content, it is inevitable that heresy will lead to schism. And since the faith is professed by life and conduct as well, its denial through injustice or other forms of sin must also tend to be divisive. On the other hand, it is vital to distinguish what is essential for loyalty to the apostolic tradition from what is not.

Unreasonable demand for conformity, as well as a lack of concern about excessive diversity, militate true communion.

35. Thus the unity of the Church needs to be both nurtured and defended, and to this end God has equipped it with ministries of unity, exercised especially through the episcopate. In the first place their ministry is to hold diverse communities together in one communion, by mutual recognition, by interpetation and by reconciliation. When necessary, it also involves discerning where diversity has become departure from the apostolic norm, and expressing the church's judgement on it. Those who have the ministry of oversight are responsible for guarding, co-ordinating and promoting the diverse gifts within each local community as well as the distinctive traditions of the communities themselves, while all the time safeguarding the fundamental unity of the People of God.

36. The catholicity of God's love demands that all the diverse gifts and graces given by God to his people should find room in his Church. The particular gifts that each member exercises are for building up the whole body of Christ. So every Christian is called both to contribute and to receive. And what is true of the individual is true of the local church. Communion with

neighbouring churches and with the universal Church is essential to the integrity of its self-understanding. Life in self-sufficient isolation, which rejects the enrichment coming from other churches, is the denial of its very being. This is the sense in which we confess the Church to be both "one" and "catholic".

VI Unity and Ecclesial Communion

37. The communion which is the work of the Spirit must be embodied in a visible community. Shared discipleship needs to be manifested in a discernible manner. It is totally inadequate to speak only of an invisible unity as the fulfilment of Christ's will for his Church on earth. The purpose of the visible ecclesial community is to promote and strengthen communion with God and to proclaim the apostolic witness that in the Son the Father has reconciled the world to himself and has entrusted to the Church the ministry of reconciliation.

38. To the Communion of the Church belong certain constitutive elements which are discernible already in the life of the Church of apostolic times. We read in Acts 'So those who received (Peter's) words were baptized...And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:41-42; cf. 4:32-35).

In this picture of the Jerusalem church we can see in nascent form certain elements of ecclesial communion which must be present in the Church in every age.

39. The constitutive elements for full ecclesial communion include:

- One baptism with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

- The Confession of the one apostolic faith, revealed in the Scriptures, set forth in the Creeds, and attested by the ancient common traditions.

- A single ministry of oversight and organs of authority grounded in the life of the community - exercised collegially and primatially at local, regional and universal levels.

- The Common celebration of the eucharist as the sacramental expression of a shared faith and life.

- Shared concern for one another in mutual support and assistance, and especially for the poor and penniless, for justice and peace on earth.

- Shared commitment to the mission entrusted by Christ to his Church.

- The same basic moral values and the same vision of humanity created in the image of God as constitutive of life in communion.

- A common hope in the final consummation of the Kingdom of God.

40. These inter-related elements are constitutive of full ecclesial communion. They must all be present in order that a local community can recognise itself as a church and that local churches can recognize one another as being in communion. This does not mean that a community in which these elements are present actually lives fully by them. Communion within and between local churches will only reach its perfection in the fullness of the kingdom of heaven.

VIII COMMUNION BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

41. Our common perception of the Church and its mission urges us forward together on the voyage towards full ecclesial communion, rather than continuing on our separate ways. Unity is so central to the purpose of God that we may never before him dare to allow the visible growth of the seeds of communion to wither and die. God wills the unity of all humanity in his Kingdom. The realization of this goal is not so remote as to be entirely hidden, for already it is possible for us to taste firstfruits of the communion he intends. This foretaste of God's final destiny for his creation is both an incentive for our work and a guarantee that our labour is not in vain in the Lord (1Cor. 15:58).

42. It is important to recognize the large degree of fundamental accord that exists between our two communions and the progress in mutual understanding that has been achieved. In spite of past estrangements our long-standing common inheritance, now better understood, enables Anglicans and Roman Catholics to recognize in each other's churches a genuine likeness. Such progress must not be forfeited, even if the goal of visible unity may appear more remote than it did at the end of ARCIC-I.

43. We already share in the communion founded upon the once-for-all work of Christ and his continuing presence through the Holy Spirit. The common roots from which Anglicans and Roman Catholics have continued to draw life were acknowledged jointly in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Donald Coggan in 1977. In it they noted some of the elements of full ecclesial communion already shared:

'A common faith in God our Father, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit; our common baptism into Christ;

our sharing of the Holy Scriptures, of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Chalcedonian definition, and the teaching of the Fathers; our common Christian inheritance for many centuries with its living traditions of liturgy, theology, spirituality and mission.'

The more we build upon this basis the more we discover the depth of this communion. Moreover, along with this recognition of all that we already share, there is a growing awareness of the richness of the diversity which exists in both our traditions.

44. The Agreed Statements of ARCIC-I and ARCIC-II have contributed to this progress in our mutual understanding and relationships. Some of the recommendations of the Malta Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission (1968) have been implemented in many places. Roman Catholics and Anglicans now frequently pray together on more than an occasional basis. Our patterns of liturgy have notably converged. The same eucharistic lectionary is used in many countries. We no longer disagree on the use of the vernacular language in public worship, nor do we any longer disagree that communion in both kinds is the appropriate mode of administration of the eucharist. Church buildings are shared. In some areas there is collaboration in christian education and in service to local communities; there is closer co-operation in ministerial formation and between parochial clergy; meetings of Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops are becoming customary, engendering mutual understanding and confidence. This often results in joint practical action and

common statements on social and moral issues. This measure of communion that we experience, though ecclesially separated, can only be explained as the fruit of the communion we share with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

45. After the publication of ARCIC-I's Final Report and ARCIC-II's Statement on Salvation and the Church, concern was expressed in many quarters about the ecclesiological basis of our work. The importance of this subject is underlined by the growing awareness that all ecumenical endeavour depends upon the understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. It is clear for us, as we conclude this document, that despite the continuing obstacles, our two communions share a fundamental agreement, as we have set it out above, in what Christ wishes his Church to be. This should enable us to examine our present difficulties with hope because of our common certainty regarding the goal.

46. Apparently insuperable obstacles both from the past and of recent origin must not delude us into thinking that there is no further room for advance. On the contrary, there are numerous areas wide open for growth in mutual understanding and sharing. Our agreement about the will of Christ for his Church impels us to seek the resolution of the doctrinal issues that keep us apart and make visible unity impossible. Without their resolution we cannot join together in the communion of the Lord's table, which is the sign of our communion in the one Church. Christians share responsibility not only for the good of their own communities but for the Church's accomplishment of its God-given role in the fulfilment of his purpose for the world. Under God the Church does not exist merely for itself but in order that all creation may be led to give him the praise that is his due.

47. The unresolved matters we must now face together are all affected by the agreed understanding of communion we have elaborated. Hence the crucial importance of this document for the continuation of our task. Moreover our agreement on communion enables us to see how communion is related to each of these remaining issues:

- the consequences of the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate within the Anglican Communion for the re-establishment of ecclesial communion between our churches. For the Roman Catholic Church this seriously affects our existing communion, in so far as it constitutes a change in the unbroken and universal tradition which that Church does not consider itself able to authorise. Some Anglican provinces consider this action to be a legitimate development of the tradition in the light of the fullness of communion of all humankind the Church is intended to signify.
- the denial of the validity of Anglican Orders in the Bull Apostolicae Curae of Pope Leo XIII 1896 with its consequent limitation of growth in sacramental communion. Resolution of this problem involves first of all the question of communion of faith concerning the eucharist and the ordained ministry, considered by ARCIC-I it also requires the recognition of ministries through the reconciliation of separated episcopal successions. To this is now further added the difficulty for both the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion in the implementation of any future agreement on the ordained ministry brought about by differences on the ordination of women.

- the competence of a church in a particular country or region, or of a communion of churches, to make decisions in matters of faith or order which affect the communion of the whole Church. Anglicans have traditionally questioned whether the doctrinal statements of a universal council or primate are known to be fully assured for all Christians before their reception by the whole Church; Roman Catholics point out that developments in the ordained ministry would similarly require ecumenical consensus; for both Anglicans and Roman Catholics the understanding of the Church as communion thus raises the issue of the proper degree of autonomy to be accorded to the church of a particular country or region in relation to central structures, whether collegial, conciliar or primatial, and of the independence of separated communions committed to the search for full ecclesial communion.
- our respective responses to some major ethical issues which affect our living in communion, our common life and common witness.
- non-theological factors related to the cultural ethos of our communities that are divisive, which need to be given much more serious consideration.

48. We are already engaged in the study of these issues in the light of our understanding of communion. We are also engaged in the search for the next steps which we might take to deepen the communion already existing between our two churches, according to the commission given us in 1982 (Common Declaration of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope John Paul II). This will constitute the next stage in our work. The more complex the issues, the slower and more difficult progress is likely to be. Paradoxically, the closer we draw together the more painful divisive issues become. But with God nothing is impossible.