

**Primates' Meeting Communiqué**  
**Rome**  
**2 May 2024**

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. –Eph. 4:2-5*

**Prayer and pilgrimage**

1. The 23rd Primates' Meeting of the Anglican Communion has been marked by humble gratitude for all that we share and a renewed commitment to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The unity of the Church, and of our own Communion, is given as a gift by God and offered as a call to which we must respond. We rejoice in our Lord's victory over the grave. He has, in his body, overcome the wall of division and reconciled all things to himself, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Eph. 2; Col. 1:20). In him, we are called, with all Christians and churches, to the one hope of our calling, and to a common profession of "one faith, one Lord, one baptism" (Eph. 4:4-5).
2. Our gathering was shaped by pilgrimage in Rome, at the threshold of the apostles, Saints Peter and Paul. Beginning in the footsteps of St Paul, we visited the Abbey of Tre Fontane, traditionally believed to be the site of the saint's martyrdom. Amid readings from Scripture, we walked from the steps of the Scala Coeli church, dedicated to Our Lady of Martyrs, into the Church of St Paul's martyrdom, and then the adjoining Cistercian abbey church, for an extended period of silent prayer and reflection.
3. At the Papal Basilica of Saint Paul outside the Walls, the site of St Paul's tomb, we were welcomed warmly by His Eminence Cardinal James Harvey. Fr Edmund Power, OSB, guided us through the basilica, culminating in a moment of prayer and reflection at the tomb of the Apostle. The visit concluded with a solemn celebration of the evening office of Vespers with the monastic community. At the end of the service, Cardinal Harvey presented each of us with a simple pectoral St Benedict Cross.
4. In the evening, we gathered, with many Anglican and ecumenical guests, at the Anglican Centre in Rome, where we were welcomed by the Most Revd Ian Ernest, Director of the Centre, and the Revd Fr Martin Browne, OSB, of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity. An online version of the Centre's exhibition to mark the 50th anniversary of its John Moorman Library was officially launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury.
5. On Tuesday we visited the community of Sant'Egidio, a lay community founded to serve the poor, work for peace, and pray. The community's joyful offering of education, medical care, and food to refugees and migrants answers the call to love our neighbour as ourselves wherever we see need. After a meal together we ended the day with sung Vespers at Santa Maria in Trastevere.



6. On Wednesday evening, His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, provided a profound reflection on synodality and the vocation of the Church in Christ, rooted in the communion of the Trinity, about which a rich conversation ensued. We were grateful, in turn, to continue the conversation on Thursday morning in a private audience with His Holiness, Pope Francis, who — as Archbishop Justin Welby observed — ministered to us pastorally over the period of an hour. We encouraged him in turn, after he movingly said: “My job is tough. Please pray for me.”
7. He helpfully recalled the fact that Anglicans and Catholics share a common trinitarian faith, common baptism, the Holy Scriptures and creeds, and the Chalcedonian definition and teaching of the Fathers: in short, a “common Christian inheritance for many centuries” (ARCIC, Church as Communion, §50). These shared riches can buoy our spirits and calm our fears amid inevitable “moments of tension and misunderstanding.” Recognizing that the “true protagonist” and “primate” of Scripture is the Holy Spirit, we can, said the pope, “embrace” our disagreements without fear, by seeking renewed understanding in a spirit of gentleness.

### **Making room for one another**

8. All of these conversations were undergirded by our own daily prayer and Holy Communion. We marked the rich diversity of our global family as each Eucharist was led by a primate in a language other than English, set within a recognisable liturgical pattern.
9. Our gathered sessions included bible studies that invited reflection on differing kinds of leadership in the Church. Each day we studied the book of the Acts of the Apostles, reflecting on four aspects of leadership: directing, participating, delegating, and exhorting. The discussions on the texts spoke directly to the ministry of the primates and shaped the whole of our meeting. We found opportunities to share the joys and challenges of episcopal leadership, to hear stories of encouragement, and to learn from and with one another. These, and many other such conversations, lifted our hearts and focused our minds on the faithfulness and resilience of the Church around the world.
10. Four sessions of our meeting were devoted to a preliminary consideration of a working paper of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO), which had been commissioned by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-18, Resolution 3(a)). The paper imagines afresh the Anglican vocation to seek and serve the visible unity of all Christians, addresses honestly the fractures of the Anglican Communion, and describes the evolution of the structures of the Communion from 1867 to the present.
11. We agree wholeheartedly with the call to reconciliation and deeper engagement one with another, and we believe there is great hope for progress in this regard. We look forward to interacting with a revised version of the paper, reflecting the conversations of this meeting, when it is published in the near future.
12. Two proposals of the paper suggested ways forward for the Communion. The first concerns the way in which we describe the nature of the Anglican Communion. The classic, imaginative description proposed by the Lambeth Conference of 1930 (resolution 49) has served us well,



and still captures the spirit of Anglican longing for full visible unity. In view of the changes to the Instruments of Communion since 1930 and our continuing call to seek full communion one with another, we agree with IASCUFO that an updated description will be helpful. The Primates' Meeting anticipates a continuing conversation with IASCUFO about its proposed recasting of the 1930 statement, in advance of the next meeting of the ACC.

13. The second proposal of the paper imagined the prospect of an elected primate who might serve alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other Instruments of Communion as chair of the Primates' Meeting, and potentially as president of the Anglican Consultative Council. Archbishop Welby chose not to attend the session, the better to encourage a comfortable exchange of views.
14. Although we did not support this second proposal, we began to discuss ways of assisting and broadening aspects of the Archbishop of Canterbury's ministry in the Communion, including through the Regional Primates who form the Primates' Standing Committee. We welcome suggestions and further conversation in this regard from IASCUFO and others.
15. We could not help but feel keenly the absence of friends and colleagues who were unable to be with us, for a variety of reasons, at this Primates' Meeting. We seek their contributions to our continuing discernments about the faith and order of the Communion. Hopefully, those present at this meeting who will also attend the June gathering of the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches will convey our desire for conversation and mutual discernment of the way forward together.

### Hope for the future

16. Looking ahead, the call to mutual respect and accompaniment with one another is foremost in our mind, as we seek to answer the call of communion and the call to faithful engagement of the world around us. Waiting for one another (1 Cor. 11:33), and in that way "bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:2), tending to the Body of Christ and to the poor converge in a singular ministry of service, modelled by our Lord (Mark 20:28). Humbling ourselves, as "he humbled himself and became obedient" (Phil. 2:8), we wish to cultivate the kind of love described so well by our brother Francis in his evangelical exhortation. "Only a love that becomes gratuitous service, only the love that Jesus taught and embodies," can heal our divisions, and draw us into the fullness of communion that will, in Christ, be our end. "Only that love," said the pope, "which does not appeal to the past in order to remain aloof or to point a finger, only that love which in God's name puts our brothers and sisters before the ironclad defence of our own religious structures, only that love will unite us."
17. May God enable the churches of the Anglican Communion, and all communities of the Body of Christ, to heed these words and to make them true in our lives and ministries, as a courageous witness in the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is our hope and our salvation.

