

# Sharing in The Apostolic Communion

## Report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission

### Preface

The International Dialogue between Anglicans and Methodists had its beginning in the Lambeth Conference of 1988. The invitation by the Anglican bishops to begin formal conversations was enthusiastically accepted by the World Methodist Council.

The dialogue began with Anglican and Methodist leaders from around the world coming together with diversity in theology and practice, even within the two communions. As we continued our common journey, prayer, worship, and work became increasingly intermingled. We began as separate sides. We concluded as one community.

Our methodology included three specific elements.

1. We produced an interim report which was widely distributed within both communions, including guided questions for responses. This report received twenty-one responses from every level of our two communions. We especially acknowledge that three of our responses came from joint bodies of Anglicans and Methodists in Great Britain, Ireland, and Southern Africa. We are grateful to those who responded and we have incorporated many of their suggestions into this final report.
2. We used numerous recent ecumenical texts, most notably **Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry** (Lima, 1982) and even more recent fruits of bilateral dialogues involving Anglicans and Lutherans such as the Porvoo Common Statement and the Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue which have produced further convergences that we have built upon.
3. We found that, in light of the responses to questions raised by the Interim Report, more time and attention had to be spent on matters that divided our two communions than on those upon which we are already happily agreed. Therefore, more has been said about the ministry than about doctrine.

We commend this document to our two sponsoring bodies, to the World Methodist Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro in August, 1996 and to the Anglican Consultative Council for presentation to the Lambeth Conference in July, 1998. We also urge that Anglicans and Methodists in every place study the text together as in itself a step toward unity.

It is our hope that the proposals and the enabling steps at the conclusion of the document will be carefully considered and affirmed, and, under God's guidance, enacted by the appropriate bodies in each Communion.



5. Denominations and ecclesial traditions have developed as ways to understand, express and live the Gospel. They provide a heritage to be honoured and even celebrated. But all such bodies are incomplete and limited by our sinfulness and finitude, and ultimately by the ideal of Christian unity. 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 Saviour of the world.
6. The present report has benefited from the responses of the churches to an interim draft. The text bears the following structure. The first main section describes the present situation (I). The following three sections address the goal of fuller communion in faith, mission and sacramental life: Faith and Doctrine (II), Mission and Ministry (III), Sacraments and the Life of the Spirit (IV). A concluding fifth section offers proposals to enable our two Communion to grow in worship, mutual care and mission together (V).

## I. THE PRESENT SITUATION

7. With the historical memory of our separation and the perception of growing convergence, the Anglican and Methodist Communion have been encouraged to seek fuller communion in faith, mission and sacramental life as a stage towards the visible unity of all Christians. We see that the work of the Spirit has not always been acknowledged in the ordered life of the Church. The Evangelical Revival, the rise of Methodism and the Tractarian movement are eminent examples of the inbreaking of the Spirit. Recognising our common Baptism, we now hear the Holy Spirit calling us to fuller communion. We yearn to respond to this divine call which prompts us to reclaim one another. We recognise that we are called to fuller 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 (Un 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). Our quest is to share more fully life in the Triune God. The fuller communion to which we believe we are now being called includes
  - agreement in core doctrines;
  - the foundation of our common baptism and the mutual recognition of membership;
  - a Eucharistic communion going beyond mutual hospitality;
  - mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries and rites;
  - the fellowship of help, encouragement and prayer for one another;
  - collaboration in evangelism, mission and service;
  - national, regional and local structures of common decision-making.

8. 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 five national and multinational churches throughout the world, in communion with the see of Canterbury and each other. Anglicans consider the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates Meeting together with the Archbishop of Canterbury to be the "Instruments" of Anglican unity. 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 sixty eight Methodist bodies are found witnessing in almost a hundred countries. They join together in the World Methodist Council for consultation, fellowship and mutual encouragement and co-operation. Methodists and Anglicans have contact with each other in most places, and while these contacts have often been positive, sometimes they have not. Both Methodist and Anglican churches have joined united and uniting churches, some of which are members both of the World Methodist Council and the Anglican "Instruments' '. 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.
9. In Methodism, two historic Black Churches (The African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion) emerged as protests against acts of injustice, and another (The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church) 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.
10. 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. The united churches of North and South India and Pakistan include Anglicans and Methodists in wider unions. 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 Communions.
11. Achieving fuller 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.

12. 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.

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

**a. In worship,**

- i. Joint worship on such significant occasions for our traditions as the Easter Vigil, All Saints' Day, Patronal Festivals, Aldersgate Sunday, Richard Allen Day (AME), James Varrick Day (AME2), Covenant Service, and other local observances.
- ii. Mutual eucharistic hospitality, when 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. In 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 is 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 as, for example, meeting during Lent, or focusing on a Christian approach to such issues as peace, justice and the environment.

**c. In Co-operation,**

- i. The formation of a contact group or joint committee between churches in the two Communions. This contact group might

suggest specific ways in which members of the other Communion could participate in decision making groups at various levels.

- ii. Co-operation between the Anglican parish and the Methodist church in an area in one common project, either continuing or annual (eg. day-school, evangelistic campaign, homeless shelter).
- iii. The creation of new Anglican-Methodist long term cooperative partnerships 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.

## **II. FAITH AND DOCTRINE**

14. 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**

15. The following can be affirmed 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.

16. As an instance of the existing agreement between us in core doctrines, we gladly note 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. We also rejoice that the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland report that, "As far as Ireland is concerned, no further doctrinal assurances are needed from either Communion". Further, the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church and

the three historic Black Methodist Churches in the USA have all given their approval to the doctrinal consensus of the **Consultation on Church Union** (1984).

17. Provided agreement remains firm on central or core doctrines, it is important that we do not demand of each other a greater uniformity of interpretation than we experience in our own separate communions.

### **Official Doctrinal Texts and Standards**

18. The churches of our two Communions hold in common a number of official doctrinal texts and standards. We all affirm the Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith and life and their sufficiency as containing all things necessary to salvation. We all affirm the beliefs contained in the Apostles' and Nicene-Constantinopolitan creeds which we employ in our services of worship. We all affirm the fundamental principles of the English Reformation, to which the formularies of the 16th century, Homilies, Prayer Book and Articles, bear historic testimony. Both Anglicans and Methodists have used 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.
19. 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.
20. In addition, the historic Black Methodist Churches have drawn on the authenticity of the experiences of their respective Founders. The Founders withdrew themselves from the Mother Church either for reasons of racial discrimination or for the freedom of worshipping "under their own vine and fig tree".
21. When churches of our two Communions have become part of united churches in various lands, their doctrinal texts and standards have been respected as an important part of the common tradition in the united churches.

### **The Location of Doctrinal Decision Making**

22. There are certain common features among the churches in the two Communions 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 by the Bishops in the Anglican communion acting collegially in doctrinal decisions.

### **Characteristic Doctrinal Emphases**

23. 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**

24. 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: the perseverance of the baptised community 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; order and discipline in our corporate existence; openness to the operation and gifts of the Holy Spirit. 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.

25. We can agree in seeing the living Church, Christ's body, as by God's grace 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). While we recognise with humble thanksgiving that the Church is the



Body of Christ and therefore of divine origin as God's Church, we also agree that both Anglican and Methodist churches, as human institutions, are incomplete, frail and provisional, and will still be so even if united. 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

26. 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 Communion have already entered into unions, e.g., in South India and in North India; 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.
27. Second, scholars of both Communion have contributed to our understanding of the *Bible and of Christian origins* in ways which have shed fresh light on ecumenical questions.
28. 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 Communion a common appreciation for different cultural styles and heritages in worship. Our two Communion participated in the 'Lima process' from its very beginnings and most of our churches have made generally favourable responses to the WCC Faith and Order text of 1982 on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM).
29. Fourth, churches in both our Communion 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. The differing responses to the evangelistic needs and opportunities of the 18th century 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.
30. Fifth, churches in both Communion 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

31. 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, in mercy God sent his Son. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).
32. "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.
33. 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".
34. 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 challenge us how to bring to contemporary situations "things both old and new". Our various approaches to mission have been partial, bound by time and culture, and yet blessed.
35. 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 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.
36. 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.

37. 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 every place.
38. Throughout the world, our churches relate to the state in a variety of ways, from establishment of the church to persecution. Some of these past and present relationships affect our life together, and invite prayerful and honest mutual exploration. In our life as churches, we affirm that we are equal partners in Christ's mission, united in prayer and service.

## **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 to be engaged in the ministry and mission of 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 in 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 Christian unity.
40. Both Methodists and Anglicans recognise baptism as the sacrament of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection by which we are admitted to the Church and are called to participation in Christ's mission in the world. "As the Father sent me, so I send you." (Jn 20:21). 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 and 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 God's providence and 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 to equip the saints (Eph 4:12) for their apostolic task. Whereas in baptism all of the people of God are turned outwards towards the world where Christ leads us, in ordination some of the baptised are called and set apart to serve the Gospel and the people gathered by Christ's Gospel: by the faithful preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments, by regularly recalling the people of God to their apostolic task in and for the world, leading and encouraging them in it and 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"). The ordained ministry is never an end in itself; nor is it within and for the Church alone. It is a providential servant leadership within and for the people of God in the world.

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 (I 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, ordination always takes place by authority of the Conference, which entrusts presidency of the rite of ordination to Bishops, Presidents or other ordained ministers. The laying on of hands by those duly appointed is, at the same time, a sign of the Spirit's gift and 'an acknowledgement 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. "During the second and third centuries," as BEM, M19 phrases it, "a threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon became established as the pattern of ordained ministry throughout 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 Episcopate 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). Both Richard Hooker and John Wesley allowed for the existence of such variations within Christian ecclesial bodies.
45. A new type of ministry arose in Methodism in this way. Lay people with the requisite gifts were used "in connexion with Mr. Wesley" as preachers and as pastors for the care and nurture of local societies. Some were itinerant, and some local, preachers. This development 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 episcopate for the particular Christian community. Episcopate 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 with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3. 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 episcopate 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). Episcopate 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 episcopate for the congregations of Christ's people. Whether a church claims an 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 safeguard 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.

### **Episcope as carried out in the three-fold ministry**

49. Those Churches in our two Communion which have carried out episcopacy by means of the three-fold order of bishops, presbyters (priests or elders) and deacons value this personal ministry in respect of episcopacy as one sign of the apostolicity of the Church and of its succession from the calling and commissioning of the earliest disciples by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry and after his resurrection.
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. Servanthood is an essential part of all ordained ministry, whether that of bishop, presbyter or deacon.
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 episcopacy 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: "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 of 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 his people and be known by them; he must proclaim and interpret Christ's Gospel to them; and lead them in the 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**, pages 30-31). The COCU

Consensus describes bishops functioning as "liturgical leaders, teachers of the Apostolic Faith, pastoral overseers, leaders in mission, representative ministers in the act of ordination, administrative leaders, servants of unity, participants in governance" (**The COCU Consensus: In Quest of a Church of Christ Uniting** (1984), Ministry, paras. 45-51). The bishop has been the principal minister of the sacraments, sharing many of his duties collegially with presbyters.

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 time the Church developed a broader conception of the meaning and function of presbyteral order, and priests became the most common ministers of sacramental grace for all the people of God. 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 of 1968 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 in ever increasing numbers in a growing number of Provinces 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 dealing

with the effects of these decisions made in some of its provinces on its own unity as a Communion..

### **Formal lay ministries**

57. The apostolate of lay people is primarily in the world. But just as ordained ministers live and witness in the world beyond the institutional church, so many lay people offer their gifts within the work of the visible Church with a commitment growing from their baptismal responsibilities. This is to be welcomed as signs of the Spirit's abundant work. In the experience of our Churches, and especially in Methodism, laypeople have had the role of pioneers and preachers in the founding of churches.
58. All lay people have their proper roles in the 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, administrators of various sorts and other such leaders give their time and talents generously in local congregations and other levels of church work. Both our Communion affirm their work and acknowledge its value in the total ministry of the Church.
59. Both our Communion are concerned in our time to articulate an adequate theology of ministry, lay and ordained, and create the necessary conditions to foster a prepared and committed laity and clergy, both being necessary for the life and mission of a faithful Church.

### **Episcopate in Anglicanism and Methodism since the 18th Century**

60. 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. Being a presbyter of the Church of England, believing himself a "scriptural episcopos", and acting in an emergency situation, Wesley appointed two men, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, as "Superintendents" for the American church to provide there the same kind of oversight that he was able to provide in England; at the same time he ordained two other men as deacon and then elder for ministry in North America. In the American church, the superintendent came to be known as bishop.
61. In England, Wesley made provision however for a continuance of the Societies after his death through the episcopate of a body of itinerant preachers known as the "Legal Hundred", which in turn became the Conference as we know it today. For over forty years, from 1795 to 1836, the main Wesleyan body on the whole avoided actions which would prejudice a living relationship with the Church of England. In 1836, the Wesleyans accepted the necessity to act separately as a church, and decided to ordain the itinerant preachers by prayer and the



imposition of hands. 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 Leading to the Mutual Recognition of their Apostolicity**

62. 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).
63. 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 fuller communion in faith, mission and sacramental life with each other.
64. 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 (cf. para. 16 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.'
65. 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.

66. We cannot emphasize strongly enough the fundamental statement made earlier, and expressed clearly in the Lima document and in the statements of various bilateral conversations made by both our 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 reaffirm that Christ calls the Church to his mission in the world, renewing it 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 of 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, for example, 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 that exists 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.

### **Moving toward the Recognition of each other's Ministry including the Re-establishment of the historic Episcopate**

69. We believe the recognition of each other's apostolicity as churches 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 fuller 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 episcopate. 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 who have been ordained as Methodist or Anglican ministers according to the due order of their churches.

71. The whole Commission realizes 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 fuller communion in faith, mission and sacramental life. Responses to our Interim Report also made clear the importance of clarifying the meaning and significance of the historic episcopate. The following paragraphs (in particular 72 to 78) therefore address the subject, dwelling particularly on Anglican and Anglican-Lutheran agreed statements in addition to **Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry**.
72. We return to the important paragraph M38 of BEM quoted earlier (para. 64). There it is observed that "Today Churches, including those engaged in union negotiations, are expressing willingness to accept episcopal succession as a sign of the apostolicity of the life of the whole Church", and "as a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church". The Methodist Church of Great Britain, in union negotiations with the Church of England, responded positively to Archbishop Fisher's invitation in 1946 "to take episcopacy into their system" by twice voting in 1969 and 1972 to adopt a form of church government that included the episcopate as understood by the Church of England. Unions with Anglicans (and Presbyterians and Congregationalists) in South India, and in North India (with these churches and with Baptists), have also demonstrated this willingness.
73. The phrase "historic episcopate" has been used regularly within Anglicanism at least since the second half of the 19th century, but is not used by the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox Churches. Nor does the Lima text use it, generally preferring to speak of the 'apostolic tradition', when referring to the Church's apostolicity as a whole, and of "episcopal succession" when referring specifically to the continuity in handing on personal episcopate from one generation to another in the life of the Church. In early ecumenical dialogue, Anglicanism began to use the term "historic episcopate" when commending the importance of episcopal ministry to other parts of the Church.
74. In this context the term appears as the fourth element in the so-called "Chicago Quadrilateral", adopted by the bishops of the Episcopal Church of the USA in 1886, and offered by them as a basis for the creation of a united church within the USA. The Quadrilateral, slightly modified, was then adopted by the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1888, as the basis on which Anglicans would enter into negotiations with other churches for the eventual visible unity of the Church worldwide. All four elements were deemed essential principles of unity within an apostolic church; the historic episcopate was not to be taken on its own.
75. The Resolution of 1888 states:

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made toward home reunion:

- a. The Holy Scriptures of Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation", and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- b. The Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
- c. The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
- d. 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.

76. Within Anglicanism, the historic episcopate denotes the continuity of oversight in the Church through the ages from the earliest days, expressed in a personal episcopal ministry, the intention of which is to safeguard, transmit, and restate in every generation the apostolic faith delivered once for all to saints. It is not the only way by which the apostolic faith is safeguarded and transmitted, nor is it exercised apart from the Church as a whole. It is exercised within the Church, recalling the people of God (para 41 above) to their apostolic vocation. It is exercised in an interplay with the whole people of God, in which their reception of that ministry is a crucial element. Anglicans see the Lima text's description of the exercise of episcopate collegially, personally and communally (BEM M26) as essential to their understanding of the ministry of the historic episcopate. It is a personal episcopal ministry, but always exercised collegially (i.e., together with other bishops, and with the clergy within each diocese), and also communally (i.e. together with the laity and clergy in synod, convention or council).

77. Anglicans have come to use the language of "sign" when referring to the historic episcopate, in harmony with the Lima text, which speaks of "episcopal succession as a sign of the apostolicity of the life of the whole church" (BEM M38). We have already quoted the phrase in which episcopal succession is said to be a "sign" though not a guarantee of the continuity and unity of the church (BEM 38). The Lima text also speaks of ordination as (a) invocation to God that the one to be ordained "be given the power of the Holy Spirit in the new relation which is established between this minister and the local christian community and, by intention, the Church Universal" (BEM M42) and (b) as a "sign" of God's granting of this prayer (BEM M43). Anglicans speak both of the episcopal succession, or in their terms, the historic episcopate, as a sign of the apostolicity and continuity and unity of the Church, and also more narrowly, of the act of ordination as itself a "sign". The Porvoo agreement of the British and Irish Anglican Churches with the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches refers to the act of the laying on of hands with prayer in ordination as follows:

"The precise significance or intention of the laying on of hands as a sign is determined by the prayer or declaration which accompanies it. In the case of the episcopate, to ordain by prayer and the laying on of hands is to do what the apostles did, and the Church through the ages.

"In the consecration of a bishop the sign is effective in four ways: first it bears witness to the Church's trust in God's faithfulness to his people and in the promised presence of Christ with his Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit to the end of time; secondly, it expresses the Church's intention to be faithful to God's initiative and gift, by living in the continuity of the apostolic faith and tradition; thirdly, the participation of a group of bishops in the laying on of hands signifies their and their churches' acceptance of the new bishop and so of the catholicity of the churches; fourthly, it transmits ministerial office and its authority in accordance with God's will and institution. Thus in the act of consecration a bishop receives the sign of divine approval and a permanent commission to lead his particular church in the common faith and apostolic life of all the churches.

"The continuity signified in the consecration of a bishop to episcopal ministry cannot be divorced from the community of life and witness of the diocese to which he is called. In the particular circumstances of our churches, the continuity represented by the occupation of the historic sees is more personal. The care to maintain a diocesan and parochial pattern of pastoral life and ministry reflects an intention of the churches to continue to exercise the apostolic ministry of word and sacrament of the universal Church."

The Porvoo document continues by describing the historic episcopal succession as a "sign":

"The whole Church is a sign of the Kingdom of God; the act of ordination is a sign of God's faithfulness to his Church, especially in relation to the oversight of its mission. To ordain a bishop in historic succession (that is, in intended continuity from the apostles themselves) is also a sign. In so doing the Church communicates its care for continuity in the whole of its life and mission, and reinforces its determination to manifest the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles. To make the meaning of the sign fully intelligible it is necessary to include in the service of ordination a public declaration of the faith of the Church and an exposition of the ministry to which the new bishop is called. In this way the sign of historic episcopal succession is placed clearly in its full context of the continuity of the proclamation of the gospel of Christ and the mission of his Church.

"The use of the sign of the historic episcopal succession does not by itself guarantee the fidelity of a church to every aspect of the apostolic faith, life and mission. There have been schisms in the history of churches using the sign of historic succession. Nor does the sign guarantee the personal faithfulness of the bishop. Nonetheless, the retention of the sign remains a permanent challenge to

fidelity and to unity, a summons to witness to, and a commission to realize more fully, the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles" (**Together in Mission and Ministry The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe**, London: Church House Publishing (1993), paragraphs 47-51).

78. In the present context of this Methodist Anglican Dialogue, it has to be admitted that the Methodists have not always seen episcopal consecration as the Porvoo Common Statement describes it, or experienced the historic episcopate as a sign of the unity, continuity or apostolicity of the church. To the extent that they have in their history experienced it otherwise, the effectiveness of the sign has been de facto called in question. A sign, even when it is given by God, can become in the fallenness of human life, even life within the Church, an occasion of disunity rather than unity. By the same token, in the mercy and calling of God, it can become again a gift of grace. Anglicans who treasure the historic episcopate within the polity they believe God has given them, seek to offer it to Methodists in the hope that it become again for all of us a gracious sign of the unity and continuity Christ wills for his Church.

79. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 sent out an appeal to all Christian people for the "reunion of Christendom", in which it reaffirmed the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888, but substituted a different wording for the fourth element of the Quadrilateral as follows:

"A ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body."

It then asked, "May we not reasonably claim that the episcopate was the one means of providing such a ministry? It is not that we call in question for a moment the spiritual reality of the ministries of those Communion which do not possess the layepiscopate. On the contrary, we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace". Having thus acknowledged the positive status of the ministries of churches that do not possess the historic episcopate, the Lambeth resolution urged that the historic episcopate "is now and will prove to be in the future the best instrument for maintaining the unity and continuity of the church". At the same time it emphasised that "the office of a bishop should be everywhere exercised in a representative and constitutional manner".

80. The Commission believes that the historic episcopate will be one sign of the unity and continuity of the Church, as it moves into greater unity in the future. The Commission reiterates the view of the Lambeth Quadrilateral that fundamental to that unity and continuity is the authority both our churches ascribe to the Bible and to the Creeds, and to the continuing celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Holy Communion. These are indeed effective signs of the Church, through the grace of God, constituting its unity and continuity. Ministerial order is a further sign, and within that, the historic

episcopate is also such a sign. In the due transmission of ministerial order we recognize that, following the mutual recognition of our two churches, a bishop of the historical episcopate as we have described it will always take part in the ordination of ministers of the word and sacrament by the laying on of hands. At the same time we reaffirm the principle accepted in the British Anglican-Methodist scheme of 1963-72 that liberty of interpretation of the meaning of such participation is to be fully respected (cf para 17 above).

81. The Commission sees the exercise of episcopate focused in the personal ministry of the bishop - never forgetting that it is to be exercised "in a collegial and communal way" - as having particular importance in relation to the disciplinary and pastoral care of the church and especially of the clergy, and also in the representative role which the bishop carries in relation to the world outside the Church. The bishop is there to speak and act and suffer for the apostolic faith, as the Church's representative recognisable and known inside and outside the church. The bishop of course does not do this exclusively; many others, and ordained, bear witness to the apostolic faith by their life and action and words, but the bishop is charged by the church to take the lead. The public exercise of this ministry of churches, chiefly Orthodox oversight is inaugurated in each time and place by the public act of consecration through the laying on of hands accompanied by the prayer of the whole people of God.
82. We commend this portraiture of the "historic episcopate" as Anglicans understand it and wish to share it as a sign and pledge of wider Christian unity. Much of what Anglicans value in the episcopal succession, Methodists have sought to ensure in their own succession of ministries: first, collegially and communally in the decisions of Conference governing the life of local churches; and then personally in the prayer and laying on of hands as the normal sign of maintaining a faithful ministry in the church in every generation (cf. BEM M38). Moreover, in American Methodism and in those places which have adopted its order, and more recently; in South Africa and Nigeria, ordained ministries with the title and tasks of 'Bishop' have been intended as personal signs of apostolicity and of the continuity of faith and ministry.
83. A review of recent ecumenical conversations, undertaken by the House of Bishops in the Church of England reveals broad ecumenical agreement that:  
  
'The witness of the Gospel has been entrusted to the Churches as a whole. Therefore, the whole Church as the *ecclesia apostolica* stands in the apostolic succession. Succession in the sense of succession of ordained ministries must be seen within the succession of the whole Church in the apostolic faith. (**Apostolicity and Succession**, House of Bishops Occasional Paper, General Synod of the Church of England, Misc. 432 (1994), paragraph 11, page 4).
84. Methodist Churches have shared in this growing convergence. In every way, they understand the primary calling of the Church to be to witness to the apostolic faith in all ages. In every generation Methodist Churches have

appointed ministers to proclaim that faith in word and sacrament, and understand those ministers to be in true succession from the Wesleyan preachers and ministers, and before them from the historic church reaching back to Pentecost. For the sake of the unity of the Church, it is open to Methodists to reclaim the historic episcopate as a rich sign of the continuity and faithfulness of the church which within their own life they have solemnly sought to maintain. Embracing this sign may also be a step towards the possibility of wider union with other episcopal churches, chiefly Orthodox and Roman Catholic. This union may appear at this point to lie far in the future; nevertheless, both Methodist and Anglican international dialogues and local experience have produced remarkably fruitful results.

85. None of our churches, viewed from the human perspective, can claim to have been fully obedient to the call of Christ; no ministry has perfectly pointed the church to the faithfulness of Christ; yet both our churches recognise the presence of the crucified and risen One in our midst, and the guiding and healing hand of the Holy Spirit. In repentance and faith therefore, this Commission encourages Methodist and Anglican Churches everywhere, at the appropriate level of decision making to recognise formally the apostolicity of each other's churches and our common intention to maintain the apostolic faith. Following this mutual recognition the churches together may institute a united ministry which includes the historic succession as we have described it.

#### **IV. SACRAMENTS AND THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT**

86. Methodists and Anglicans share a common belief that the Christian life is faith working through love (Gal 5:6). That life is expressed and nurtured in many ways: through preaching, teaching, education programs, action and service in the world, prayer and adoration personal or corporate, and particularly in the celebration of the Lord's sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. It is here that the local community of believers is linked with the universal Church, round the world and through the ages, and enabled to look forward to the coming of the Kingdom.

87. In our local Anglican and Methodist communities those who are baptized, are baptized into the universal Church of Christ; they are made Christians and members of the Body of Christ. We have referred to baptism earlier in this Report, identifying its context and meaning in God's mission to the world (paras. 40, 41), and have listed baptism and the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ as elements within the Core of Doctrine upon which we are agreed (para. 15).

88. The Lima text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry declares that the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, is essentially the Sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. It expounds the meaning of the Holy Communion as "thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the Faithful, and meal of the Kingdom." According to BEM, "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" (BEM EI3). The Commission endorses this statement.

89. The Eucharist is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of his life, death and resurrection, until his coming again. It is the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present in its effects, and in which he invites us to unite ourselves to his one offering of himself. The outward and visible sign of the eucharist is bread and wine given and received at Christ's command, while the inward and spiritual grace is the body and blood of Christ given to his people and received by faith. By it we receive from God forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another, and the foretaste of the heavenly banquet which is our nourishment in eternal life. It is required that we examine ourselves, repent of our sins, and be in love and charity with our neighbour when we come to the Lord's Table.[\[1\]](#)
90. In every celebration of the Eucharist, we believe the local community to be joined to the universal Church. It is primarily because the Risen Christ is the true president at each celebration of the Eucharist that this is the case. Both our churches take care to see that the persons who preside in each community are duly authorized and commissioned so to do by those exercising episcopate in each church. In the Anglican Communion this is always a presbyter or bishop; in the Methodist churches this is also the norm, though those exercising episcopate can authorize others so to do in particular situations.
91. 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. 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
92. In some countries fewer are brought to baptism as infants in both Communions than used to be the case. In the present missionary situation that exists in all countries, both Anglicans and Methodists are challenged to order church life and liturgy so that youth and adults may come to faith, and may find ways of marking their continuing spiritual journey once they have been baptised.
93. 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.

94. 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 E3 & 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-centred preaching, is the ordinary Sunday worship.

## **V. PROPOSALS TO ENABLE OUR TWO COMMUNIONS TO GROW IN WORSHIP, MUTUAL CARE AND MISSION TOGETHER.**

95. The Commission requests the two responsible bodies to adopt the following two resolutions:

- I. As the basis for growth into fuller communion between Anglicans and Methodists in faith, mission and sacramental life, we the Lambeth Conference/the World Methodist Council; together with the World Methodist Council/the Lambeth Conference; affirm and recognize that:
  - Both Anglicans and Methodists 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 the churches of our two Communion the Word of God is authentically preached and the Sacraments instituted by Christ are duly administered.
  - Our churches share in the common confession and heritage of the apostolic faith.
- II. In virtue of this recognition of each other's apostolicity as churches we, the Lambeth Conference/the World Methodist Council, agree to establish a Joint Working Group:
  - i. to prepare a way of celebrating this mutual recognition;
  - ii. to prepare, in full accordance with the principles agreed in the report of the Anglican - Methodist International Commission, guidelines for procedures whereby the competent authorities at appropriate geographical levels would be enabled to implement:
    - The mutual recognition of members;
    - Eucharistic Communion going beyond mutual hospitality;
    - Mutual recognition and inter-changeability of ministries and rites;
    - Structures of common decision-making.

## Anglican/Methodist International Commission

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The Rev. Dr. Donald Anderson, Anglican Communion Office, London, England, *Anglican Co-Secretary*

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### Notes:

[1] 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) 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.