

The Council for Christian Unity

Faith and Order Advisory Group

Briefing paper for General Synod on

The International Anglican – Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission
Agreed Statement

Growing Together in Unity and Mission

This briefing paper first explains the background to *Growing Together in Unity and Mission* in terms of the Roman Catholic involvement in ecumenical dialogue with Christians of other traditions in general and with the Anglican Communion in particular. Then it summarises the contents of the report and, finally, it gives FOAG's response to it.

1. Roman Catholic involvement in ecumenical dialogue

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* commits Roman Catholics to involvement in the ecumenical movement. It declares:

Today, in many parts of the world, under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, multiple efforts are being expended through prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. This sacred Synod, therefore, exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to participate fully in the work of ecumenism.¹

The Decree notes that a key part of ecumenism is 'dialogue between competent experts from different Churches and Communities.' In such dialogue each of those involved 'explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out its distinctive features' and through such dialogue: 'everyone gains a truer knowledge of the teaching and religious life of both Communions.'²

As part of its commitment to ecumenism the Roman Catholic Church is therefore involved in a series of ecumenical dialogues with Churches from a wide variety of other traditions. The website of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (the Vatican's ecumenical department) currently lists the dialogues between Rome and the Orthodox Churches of the Byzantine Tradition, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Churches of the East, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Methodist Council, the Baptist

¹ W M Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967, p.347.

² Ibid p.347.

World Alliance, the Pentecostals, the Evangelicals and, of course, the Anglican Communion.³

2. Anglican- Roman Catholic Dialogue

The dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church is based on the *Common Declaration* issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI on 24 March 1966. In this declaration they affirmed their desire 'that all those Christians who belong to these two Communion may be animated by these same sentiments of respect, esteem and fraternal love.' To this end they established a dialogue that 'should include not only theological matters such as Scripture, Tradition and Liturgy, but also matters of practical difficulty felt on either side.'⁴

Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission

The dialogue called for in the *Common Declaration* has taken place at the international level primarily through the work of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

Following the initial work undertaken by the Joint Preparatory Commission from 1967 to 1968, the first phase of ARCIC's work took place from 1970-1981 and produced seven reports, *Eucharistic Doctrine* (1971), *Ministry and Ordination* (1973), *Authority in the Church I* (1976), *Elucidation of 'Eucharistic Doctrine'* (1979)⁵, *Elucidation of 'Ministry'* (1979), *Elucidation of 'Authority in the Church I'* (1981), *Authority in the Church II* (1981), which were published together as *ARCIC I: The Final Report* in 1982.

In November 1986 the Church of England's General Synod passed a motion declaring the ARCIC agreements on the 'Eucharist' and on 'Ministry and Ordination' to be 'consonant in substance with the faith of the Church of England' and the statements on 'Authority' to record 'sufficient convergence on the nature of authority in the Church for our two communions together to explore further the structures of authority and the exercise of collegiality and primacy in the Church.'⁶ Resolution 8 of the 1988 Lambeth Conference also endorsed the work of the first phase of ARCIC, recognising the statements on Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination 'as consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans' and as offering 'a sufficient basis for taking the next step forward towards the reconciliation of our Churches grounded in agreement in faith.'⁷ The conference further welcomed the reports on authority in the Church 'as a firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue on authority' and encouraged ARCIC II

³ See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/index.html.

⁴ C Hill and E Yarnold (eds), *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity*, London: SPCK 1994, pp.10-11.

⁵ The Elucidations are reports clarifying points made in the original reports to which they refer.

⁶ See *General Synod Report of Proceedings*, vol. 17, No.3, London: CHP, 1986, pp. 853-875 and 944-991.

⁷ R Coleman (ed), *The Resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences 1867-1988*, Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1989, p.202.

to continue to explore the basis in Scripture and tradition of the concept of a universal primacy, in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity, the character of such a primacy in practice, and to draw upon the experience of other Christian Churches in exercising primacy, collegiality and conciliarity.⁸

The second phase of ARCIC's work took place from 1983 to 2005, producing five reports: *Salvation and the Church* (1987), *Church as Communion* (1991), *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* (1994), *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* (1999), *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005).

At the time of writing a third phase of ARCIC's work is being planned.

The International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission

In 2000 the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and Cardinal Edward Cassidy, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, convened a meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops at Mississauga in Canada to assess the progress that had been made in Roman Catholic – Anglican relations and to chart a way forward for the future. In Its statement, *Communion in Mission*, this meeting declared:

We feel compelled to affirm that our communion together is no longer to be viewed in minimal terms. We have been able to discern that it is not just formally established by our common baptism into Christ, but is even now a rich and life-giving, multifaceted communion.

We have come to a clear sense that we have moved much closer to the goal of full visible communion than we had at first dared to believe. A sense of mutual interdependence in the Body of Christ has been reached, in which the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church are able to bring shared gifts to their joint mission in the world.⁹

The meeting therefore called for the authorities of the two Communion should now 'recognise and endorse this new stage through the signing of a Joint Declaration of Agreement,' setting out 'our shared goal of visible unity; an acknowledgment of the consensus in faith that we have reached, and a fresh commitment to share together in common life and witness.'¹⁰

The International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), a body consisting largely, though not exclusively, of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, was established to work on this proposal. Developments in the Anglican Communion since 2003 have hindered the original goal of achieving a Joint Declaration of Agreement between the two Communion. Instead, IARCCUM has produced an 'Agreed Statement': *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*.¹¹

⁸ Ibid p.203.

⁹ *Communion in Mission* 5-6. Text at <http://ecumenism.net/archive/arcic/communion-in-mission.htm>

¹⁰ Ibid 10.

¹¹ *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, London: SPCK, 2007.

Growing Together in Unity and Mission is not an authoritative declaration by either the Roman Catholic Church or the Anglican Communion, but is a statement by IARCCUM which is intended to foster discussion, reflection and shared action. It is intended that it be sent out for study and response in both communions with the aim of initiating a process that will lead to a future Joint Declaration, based on a revision of the present text.

The first part of the statement offers an appraisal of what has been achieved in the first two phases of the work of ARCIC together with an assessment of those areas where further theological work is required. The second part outlines specific steps that can currently be taken in order to deepen the fellowship in life and mission between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

3. Growing Together in Unity and Mission

(a) What has been agreed thus far

Part I of the Agreed Statement offers a summary of the points on which IARCCUM believes ARCIC to have shown agreement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Questions for further work are noted at the end of each section.

1. Belief in God as Trinity (Paragraphs 11-14)

The statement opens with an affirmation that the Christian life begins at baptism. Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics are united in their affirmation of their faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. They share the conviction that God has graciously revealed Himself to us in Christ. Consequently, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion can already recognise many of God's gifts in one another. This sharing in God's gifts already constitutes a bond of communion between us.' Both churches are called to live out this real but imperfect communion as they strive for full visible communion.

2. Church as Communion in Mission (Paragraphs 15-25)

Together, Anglicans and Roman Catholics have come to affirm the Church's calling to participate in the divine mission in the world as an effective sign of the communion, or *koinonia*, with God that is God's purpose for the whole human race.

The section looks at what Anglicans and Roman Catholics believe about what constitutes the Church and the various ways in which unity and coherence are maintained amidst the diversity of local churches (by which it means dioceses). It also points to the continuing differences between them over the elements that are necessary for the visible unity of the Church, comparing the teaching of the Lambeth Conferences (particularly the Lambeth Quadrilateral) and the Second Vatican Council, and further notes that Anglicans still have serious questions about the nature and exercise of a universal primacy.

3. The Living Word of God (Paragraphs 26-32)

This section sets out at what Anglicans and Catholics believe about Christ, the living Word who, together with the Spirit, communicates God's invitation to communion, about the unique and normative place of Scripture in the handing on of the Gospel in the Church, that is, in the Tradition of the Church. It highlights the indispensable role of preaching in enabling the Scriptures to nourish the faithful.

It notes further that while Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree about the importance of the first Four General Councils they differ over the question of the status and teaching of the later councils; there are also further differences about how teaching authority is exercised and authentic tradition discerned.

4. Baptism (Paragraphs 33-38)

Anglicans and Roman Catholics share the belief that baptism is the sacrament by which we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection and incorporated into the Christian community and that confirmation involves empowerment by the Spirit for witness and mission and a public manifestation of membership of the Church. The section emphasises that there is mutual recognition of baptism between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, which constitutes an imperative to overcome the remaining divisions between us.

5. Eucharist (Paragraphs 39-49)

Anglicans and Roman Catholics also share the belief that full participation in the Eucharist completes the sacramental process of Christian initiation. They see the Eucharist as a memorial (*anamnesis*), which makes present the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. They agree also that Christ is present at the Eucharist through the power of the Holy Spirit, that His body and blood are really given and received through the elements of bread and wine, and that faith is required for a 'life giving' encounter with Christ at the Eucharist. All further believe that the Eucharist is an occasion in which the Church gives thanks for, and receives a foretaste of God's coming Kingdom. The whole Church is involved in every celebration of the Eucharist; however, only bishops and priests should preside at the Eucharist.

The section notes, however, that without full recognition and reconciliation of ministries between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, it is impossible for this shared understanding of the Eucharist to have its full impact. Moreover, Anglicans and Roman Catholics have different disciplines for eucharistic sharing between churches that are not in visible communion with each other. Further, some Anglican churches make provision for people not to accept the sacramental ministry of women priests, even though this results in the impairment of full eucharistic communion within the Anglican Church. Finally, it notes that some Anglicans have difficulty with the 'adoration of Christ in the reserved sacrament.'

6. Ministry (Paragraphs 50-61)

Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree in seeing Christ as the source and model of all ministry; all, whether lay or ordained, are gifted by the Spirit and called to serve. The threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons is understood as part of God's

design for God's people; it is understood to have emerged from the patterns of ministry found in the New Testament through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Ordination is a sign of the apostolicity and continuity of the Church, which the bishops have a particular responsibility for maintaining. Within the priesthood of the whole people of God, the ministry of bishops and priests is distinctively priestly in character: at the Eucharist their ministry 'has a particular sacramental configuration with Christ as High Priest who continues to make intercession for us' (Heb 7:25).¹²

However, a continuing obstacle to the Roman Catholic recognition of Anglican orders is presented by *Apostolicae Curae* (1896). Moreover, there is disagreement between the Roman Catholic Church and some Anglicans on the question of the ordination of women.

7. Authority in the Church (Paragraphs 62-76)

Anglicans and Roman Catholics affirm that the primary authority for Christians is Jesus Christ; however, Christ entrusts His authority to the Church so that the Church may remain faithful to God's purpose in creation and redemption and proclaim the gospel to the world in an effective fashion. Within this, the gospel has to be constantly restated in new situations in ways that are consonant with the witness of Scripture. Responsibility for discerning and communicating God's word lies with the whole people of God, although bishops have a vital role in this process of corporate discernment as those with a special responsibility for 'promoting truth and discerning error' and for 'preserving and promoting communion.'¹³ Bishops also have a 'collegial' responsibility to maintain the whole Church in truth, upholding its unity whilst enriching the diversity of local churches. This is aided by synods and councils on all levels, as they express the common faith of the Church 'consonant with Scripture and the apostolic Tradition.'¹⁴

A ministry of primacy is required at every level of the Church's life in order to act as a 'visible link and focus of its communion'.¹⁵ The report suggests that the role of a universal primate is a specific form of that care for the universal communion of the Church that is intrinsic to the office of bishop. It notes, however, that although there is considerable agreement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the subject of authority there is disagreement about the nature and exercise of the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, the authority of ecumenical councils and the infallibility of the teaching office of the Church.

8. Discipleship and Holiness (Paragraphs 77-87)

Anglicans and Roman Catholics affirm a Christian vocation to holiness of life, an awareness of the interdependence of humanity and the rest of creation, and a belief in the dignity of all human beings. They agree that the Church should seek to continue Christ's ministry of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. They share similar forms of moral reasoning and the compatibility of their teaching on issues such as war and peace, human rights and marriage.

¹² Ibid p.32 (Para 57)

¹³ Ibid p.35 (Para 66)

¹⁴ Ibid p.36 (Para 69)

¹⁵ Ibid p.37 (Para 70)

Nonetheless, strong disagreements remain over questions of sacramental confession, divorce, abortion and contraception. The recent tensions about homosexuality in the Anglican Communion highlight the need to address anthropological and hermeneutical questions both within Anglicanism and between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

9. The Blessed Virgin Mary (paragraphs 88-92)

In spite of different forms of teaching about Mary that have developed in Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism since the Reformation, we can nevertheless ‘discern much in common in our belief about the one who, of all believers, is closest to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’¹⁶ Anglicans and Roman Catholics recognise the grace and unique vocation of Mary as the Mother of God (*Theotókos*); they see her as model of holiness, obedience and faith; they observe her festivals and accord her honour in the communion of saints. Moreover, it is ‘fitting’ to believe that ‘Christ’s redeeming work reached “back” in Mary to the depths of her being and her earliest beginnings’ and that as a sign of the eschatological hope for all of humanity ‘God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory.’ Finally, Anglicans and Roman Catholics acknowledge that Mary has a unique role in pointing people to Christ and that ‘Mary and the saints pray for the whole Church’. Therefore, asking Mary and the saints to pray for us is not something that is communion dividing.¹⁷

Despite this agreement, there are still major questions about how the Roman Catholic Marian dogmas might be affirmed in a visibly united Church. Moreover, the practice of devotion to Mary is normal for Roman Catholics but unfamiliar or even alien to many Anglicans. This is therefore an area whether further dialogue and greater mutual understanding is required.

(b) Practical examples of what Anglicans and Roman Catholics can do together.

On the basis of this agreement, the IARCCUM report invites Anglicans and Roman Catholics everywhere, led by their bishops, to join together ‘joint action in mission’, which ‘would deepen the communion we share.’¹⁸ It suggests joint action in four areas:

1. Visible expressions of our shared faith (Paragraphs 100-103)

Anglicans and Roman Catholics are encouraged to foster ‘the visible expression of their shared faith’¹⁹ in public worship and in preparing people for baptism and confirmation.

2. Joint study of our faith (Paragraphs 104-107)

¹⁶ Ibid p.46 (Para 88)

¹⁷ Ibid p.46 (Para 89)

¹⁸ Ibid p.50 (Para 99)

¹⁹ Ibid p.51

There should be joint study of the Scriptures, particularly by those training for ministry, joint study of the ARCIC agreements, the establishment of national Anglican-Roman Catholic Commissions (ARCs) where these do not yet exist and the sharing of other theological resources.

3. Co-operation in ministry (Paragraphs 108-117)

The report encourages closer co-operation in ministry between bishops, a joint exploration of how the ministry of the Bishop of Rome might be offered and received, the building up of relations between Anglican and Roman Catholic religious orders, the development of shared pastoral and spiritual care and shared training for lay ministries.

4. Shared witness in the world (Paragraphs 118-125)

Anglicans and Roman Catholics are encouraged to work together for social justice and the care of the environment, to join together in contributing to public life, to model repentance and reconciliation where they have contributed to ‘political, socio-economic or religious’ tensions and strife,²⁰ to participate together in evangelism, to foster the development of joint Anglican-Roman Catholic Church schools, to consult with one another when entering into new ecumenical partnerships and to work together more closely in their relations with those of other religions.

All these suggestions are ‘strongly commended’ to the church around the world. The report concludes:

We give thanks to God for the extensive theological consensus articulated in this document – fruits of the last forty years of dialogue – and we pray that God will richly bless all that we are now called to do in His Name. We call on all bishops to encourage their clergy and people to respond positively to this initiative, and to engage in a searching exploration of new possibilities for co-operation in mission.²¹

4. FOAG’s response to *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*

The Faith and Order Advisory Group generally welcomed *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*. The theological approach that it puts forward is based on the reports produced by the first two phases of the ARCIC process. In addition, it draws on a wide range of other material from Anglican and Roman Catholic sources and from the World Council of Churches.²² While *Growing Together in Mission and Unity* does

²⁰ Ibid p.57 (Para 120)

²¹ Ibid p.58 (Para 126)

²² The full list is resolutions from the Lambeth Conferences of 1930 and 1988, section reports from the Lambeth Conference of 1998, the Vatican II decrees on ecumenism and ecclesiology *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*, Pope Paul VI’s 1968 Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint* of 1995, his 1981 Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* and his 1994 Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, the *Catechism of the*

not represent the joint declaration of faith that had initially been hoped for, it does represent a useful synthesis of the ARCIC material and the other sources upon which it draws.

However, FOAG raised two specific concerns about *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*.

There is a complete absence on any material on justification by grace through faith. This doctrine was a central part of the theology of the English Reformation and is clearly taught in the Church of England's historic formularies. It has also historically been seen as a major point of theological division between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. It is surprising that the IARCCUM report does not cite either the agreement on this issue contained in the 1987 ARCIC report *Salvation and the Church* or the *Joint Declaration on Justification*, signed by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999.

The second concern was the section on Marian theology. This section seems to assume a positive Anglican response to the 2005 ARCIC report *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*. However, some members of FOAG believed that that report's specific conclusions about the preparation of Mary, from her conception, to be the mother of the redeemer, about Mary being taken up in the fullness of her person into glory at the end of her life, and about asking Mary and the saints to pray for us – though reflecting the devotion of some Anglicans – were not in line with received Church of England teaching. These concerns are reflected in the FOAG essays relating to the ARCIC report *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*.

FOAG was also surprised that the full significance of the ARCIC report *Life in Christ* is not explored in section 8 of *Growing Together in Mission and Unity*.

FOAG hopes that these points will be taken into account, as the text is further refined. Nonetheless, believing that growth in unity and mission will depend on common witness and the exchange of spiritual gifts, as well as clarity between areas where doctrinal agreement has been achieved and areas that require further work, FOAG feels that overall this report offers a helpful summary of the achievements of ARCIC and shows the coherence of the Anglican and Roman Catholic teaching in a number of important areas.

The practical suggestions for Anglicans and Roman Catholics to work more closely together contained in Part 2 of the statement were welcomed as being sensible and achievable, and in many cases a reflection of what is already happening in local congregations and dioceses. FOAG hopes that Anglicans and Roman Catholics will be encouraged to implement them.

Catholic Church, the PCPCU's 1984 *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, the 1987 the Pastoral Instruction of the Congregation of the Faith *Donum Vitae*, the *Montreal* and *Lima* reports produced by the World Council of Churches in 1967 and 1982, and the WCC *Canberra* statement of 1991.