

FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION

RECOGNITION BY THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND OF ORDERS CONFERRED IN OTHER CHURCHES

PREFATORY NOTE

The purpose of this document is to set forth the criteria by which the Church of England recognises the ministry of those whose orders are of churches with the historic episcopate and with whom the Church of England is not in communion.

It addresses the Church of England's recognition of the ordinations of churches which may be, appear to be, or claim to be episcopally ordered. It does not set out to discuss the recognition of the ordinations of churches ordered presbyterally or in other ways.

The Church of England has acknowledged the gifts of grace given to and in the ordained ministry of churches which have ordered oversight (*episcopate*) in ways other than that expressed in the historic episcopate. This may be seen in the cases of the Meissen Agreement with the Evangelical Churches in Germany, of the Reuilly Declaration signed with the Reformed and Lutheran churches in France and the covenant with the Methodist Church in Britain.

CONTENTS

- I: Introduction p.2
- II: Criteria for the recognition of churches and their orders p.5
- III: The ordination of candidates for ministry from other churches p.13
- Annex: Churches in communion with the Church of England and other churches whose orders are recognised and accepted by the Church of England. p.16

I: INTRODUCTION

This paper

- sets out the criteria by which the Faith and Order Commission will consider whether to recommend to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York that the Orders of a church that is not in communion with the Church of England be recognized and accepted by the Church of England, and
- offers advice to bishops on the possibility of conditional ordination where the Orders of the church in which someone was ordained have not been recognized and accepted.

Appended to it is a list of churches whose Orders have been recognized and accepted by the Church of England:

The paper is published in the interest of transparency, so that the criteria with which the Commission works when considering such questions may be more widely known. It draws on earlier work undertaken over several decades by the former Faith and Order Advisory Group and the present Commission in respect of *Episcopi Vagantes*¹ and those ordained by them, in respect of ‘Continuing Churches’ and, most recently, in respect of the Free Church of England. The Commission expects that its thinking on the issues will continue to mature in the light of further work; this paper gives an indication of its thinking in 2014.

Ministry in the Church of England by clergy ordained in other churches

The Church of England, following its understanding of the teaching and practice of the New Testament and the Early Church, holds that those who exercise ordained ministry within it must be suitable to minister in terms of their learning and personal conduct² and that they must have been episcopally ordained, either in the Church of England or in some other church.³ These criteria mean that there are three sets of questions to be considered when someone who was ordained priest or deacon in another church offers him - or herself for ministry in the Church of England:

- The first question is that of the *suitability* of the person concerned for ministry in the Church of England. There needs to be consultation with the authorities of the church(es) in which the person has previously ministered in order to discover whether there are any disciplinary, safeguarding or other issues that need to be addressed.
- If the person is found to be suitable in principle for ministry in the Church of England, consideration then needs to be given to whether there is any further *training* that the person will need in order to minister effectively in the Church of England.
- When questions of suitability and any further training have been resolved, the question then arises as to *whether the existing ordination of the person concerned can be accepted as meeting the requirement for episcopal ordination; if not, he or she will need to be ordained, absolutely or conditionally.*

¹ The Latin words *episcopi vagantes* are used as a technical term because of the lack of an agreed English term for those who are in episcopal orders, but who do not exercise an episcopal ministry within a stable Christian community.

² They must be ‘apt and meet, for their learning and godly conversation, to exercise their ministry duly to the honour of God and the edifying of his Church’ (1662 Ordinal, The Form and Manner of making of Deacons).

³ ‘No man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest or Deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be called, tried, examined and admitted thereunto according to the form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal Consecration or Ordination’ (1662 Ordinal, The Preface).

Bishops are expected to seek the advice of the Candidates Panel of the Ministry Division, which advises on both the suitability of the minister and on what additional training seems necessary in order for him or her to minister in the Church of England. Details may be found in the booklet ‘Candidates Panel and Research Degrees Panel’ on the Church of England website at www.churchofengland.org/media/873366/cp%20booklet.pdf.

The third question – whether the existing ordination of the person concerned can be accepted as meeting the requirement for episcopal ordination – is determined under the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967. This enables the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to give clerics not ordained in the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Church in Wales or the Scottish Episcopal Church written permission to minister in their respective provinces if they were either

1. ordained by a bishop of the Church of England or a church in communion with the Church of England, or
2. episcopally ordained priest or deacon in a church not in communion with the Church of England whose Orders are recognised and accepted by the Church of England.

NB. Eligibility to minister in the Church of England is determined with reference not to the church in which the cleric has most recently been ministering, but to that in which the cleric was originally ordained to the ministry, that he or she now seeks to exercise in the Church of England.

It should be noted that even where a church is in communion with the Church of England or, though not in communion, its orders are recognized and accepted by the Church of England, the Archbishops have a discretion as to whether they will give written permission to an individual cleric under the Measure.⁴

Clergy ordained in churches with which the Church of England is not in communion

Under the Measure, if a question arises whether the Church of England is in communion with another church, it shall be conclusively determined by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, acting jointly. A working [list of churches in communion with the Church of England](http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/supplementary-material.aspx#Head1-136) <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/supplementary-material.aspx#Head1-136> is printed in the Supplementary Material to the Canons of the Church of England.

Clergy ordained in churches with which the Church of England is not in communion

This paper is solely concerned with clergy who were ordained in churches with which the Church of England is not yet in communion. If such a cleric applies for written permission to minister in the Church of England, this can only be given if he or she was ordained

- in a body that the Church of England can recognize as being ‘a church’,

⁴ Since 1988 successive Archbishops of Canterbury and York have declined to give permission to clergy ordained by women bishops to minister in the Church of England in advance of any amendment of the Church of England’s own canons to permit the ordination of women to the episcopate and of a final decision concerning possible arrangements for those in the Church of England who are unable, for theological reasons, to receive the ministry of women bishops directly or indirectly. The policy was announced by Archbishop Robert Runcie in a Presidential Statement to the General Synod on 7 November 1988 (General Synod, *Report of Proceedings*, 7 November 1988, pp. 699-705).

- in a church whose Orders (and not just by a bishop whose Orders) are recognised and accepted by the Church of England, and
- episcopally (ie by a bishop).

Under the Measure, if a question arises whether the Orders of any church with which the Church of England is not in communion are recognised and accepted by the Church of England, it shall be conclusively determined by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, acting jointly. A working list of churches whose Orders are recognised and accepted by the Church of England is contained in the Annex to this paper.

It has been the practice of the Archbishops not to determine that a church is a church whose orders are recognised and accepted by the Church of England unless they have received advice from the Faith and Order Commission (or its predecessor, the Faith and Order Advisory Group) that they should do so. They may also consult the Standing Committee of the House of Bishops before coming to a final decision.

Part II of this paper sets out the criteria by which the Faith and Order Commission will consider whether to recommend that the Orders of a church be recognized and accepted.

Where someone who was previously ordained in another church not in communion with the Church of England has been accepted for ministry in the Church of England and cannot be judged to have been episcopally ordained priest or deacon in a church whose Orders are recognised by the Church of England, it will be necessary for him or her to be ordained by a bishop of the Church of England.

Knowingly to repeat episcopal ordination is a serious issue, showing a lack of faith and trust in the working of God in his Church. Therefore, where the candidate has been previously ordained by a bishop yet there is doubt whether all essential requirements for episcopal ordination have been met, the bishop may judge that he or she should be ordained conditionally, rather than absolutely. This is explained further in Part III. Such concerns will form part of the motivation for proposing the addition of further churches to the list of those whose Orders are recognised and accepted by the Church of England.

Recognition of a body as being a church and of its Orders is a necessary precursor to reconciliation between the Church of England and the church concerned. It is, however, a distinct step. Recognition may tend to foster ecumenical relationships and future dialogue (and may be undertaken after some dialogue has occurred), but it occurs not primarily for the sake of dialogue and future relationships but because the Church of England discerns that Holy Orders are conferred in the Church concerned and wishes to avoid repeating episcopal ordination.

II: CRITERIA FOR THE RECOGNITION OF CHURCHES AND THEIR ORDERS

The issue as to whether a body with which the Church of England is not in communion is ‘a church whose Orders are recognized and accepted by the Church of England’ can be broken down into two questions: whether the body can be acknowledged as a church and whether its Orders can be recognized.

A: RECOGNITION AS A CHURCH

The first criterion for the recognition of orders is whether the body in which orders have been conferred can be regarded as a properly constituted church. If a body were so regarded, this would not necessarily mean that to enter into discussions with it with a view to a closer relationship or even communion would be pressing or even possible immediately. To recognize a body as a church does not say anything about its relationship with the Church of England.

The question of the recognizability of orders is integrally related to the nature of the body in which the ministry is given. In contrast to a view that confines criteria of recognition of orders to what is required in an ordination, the Church of England, while giving a high regard to such requirements, relates closely the issues of the ecclesial reality of a body with which the Church of England is not in communion (on the one hand) and the status of the one seeking recognition (on the other). However important the succession of ministry may be, an answer to the question of whether someone has been ordained in a succession of duly ordained bishops is not sufficient to determine the recognizability of orders. Indeed, contrary to what has sometimes been supposed, the orders of someone ordained by a bishop who had been previously a bishop of the Church of England but had separated from her would not, by that fact alone, have a claim to be recognized. As the former Faith and Order Advisory Group put it in an unpublished report back in 1980, ‘This issue, whether the *church* concerned is a “true” church, is properly prior to the matter of order’.⁵ Ordained ministry is in and for the whole church and involves the whole church.⁶

For a body to be recognized as a church, certain necessary characteristics need to be present. For the Church of England, the Church is defined in Article XIX of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion:

‘The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men,⁷ in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.’

This definition is developed in the first three criteria of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral,⁸ which have informed the Church of England’s efforts towards church unity hitherto:⁹

⁵ ‘Episcopi Vagantes and those ordained by them’ (BMU/FO/80/13), para. 14.

⁶ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), *The Final Report* (London: CTS/SPCK, 1982), p. 37: ‘Ministry and Ordination’, para. 14: ‘... ministry is in and for the community and... ordination is an act in which the whole Church of God is involved...’.

⁷ In accordance with the linguistic usage of the period, ‘men’ here must be understood in an inclusive sense.

⁸ Resolution 11 of the 1888 Lambeth Conference. These characteristics can be seen as consistent with the marks of the visible Church set out in Article XIX of the Thirty-nine Articles.

⁹ Resolution IV.2(a) of the 1998 Lambeth Conference affirmed the Quadrilateral as ‘a basis on which Anglicans seek the full, visible unity of the Church’.

- (a) The Holy Scriptures of the 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.

The faith of the body in question needs to be that of mainstream Christianity, the apostolic faith as expressed in the Apostles’ Creed and the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople, whether the creeds are used in worship or not. The faith owes its expression and grounds to the witness borne by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,¹⁰ so one might doubt whether a body which did not regard these as a continuing source of truth and guide for life were a properly constituted church. Likewise, if a body lacked the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, it would lack those means by which sinners become members of the Church and united with Christ¹¹ and continue in communion with God and fellow Christians.

The faith of the body in question is, moreover, the faith of the *Church*; although the body may not be at present in communion with the Church of England, it needs to be a party which can be recognized as faithful to the Church of Jesus Christ. Such a recognition requires sensitive and non-partisan study, involving examination of the doctrinal and canonical structures of the body in question. It is not necessary that the articulation of its faith correspond in all matters to that of the Church of England; indeed, it may include elements which Anglicans have always rejected, regarding them as seriously erroneous. It must, however, be recognizable as an expression of the faith in continuity with that of the Apostles – ‘the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation’.¹²

Ministry, the Historic Episcopate and Visible Unity

Ordained ministry is something which is essential to the Church if it is to be truly the Church of Jesus Christ.¹³ Howsoever this may be expressed in another body, recognition that the ordained ministry is a distinctive gift of the Spirit is part of what makes a church a true part of the catholic Church. The Church of England does not teach that there is only one model of ministry given in the New Testament. It recognizes as churches some bodies, for example English free churches (such as the Methodist and United Reformed Churches) and Continental Protestant churches (such as the Evangelical Church in Germany and the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches) which lack the threefold ministry and the historic episcopate but have a ministry that the Church of England can acknowledge as ‘given by God and instruments of his grace’.¹⁴

However, the Church of England does teach that the threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon goes back to the Scriptures and ancient common traditions of the Church and is part of

¹⁰ ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 52: ‘Authority in the Church I’, para. 2; pp. 69-71: ‘Authority in the Church I: Elucidation’, para. 2.

¹¹ ARCIC II, *Salvation and the Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987), p. 18: para. 16; FAOC(11)23.

¹² Preface to the Declaration of Assent: Canons of the Church of England, Canon C 15.

¹³ ARCIC, *Final Report*, pp. 30-31, 36-37: ‘Ministry and Ordination’, paras 3, 14.

¹⁴ The Meissen Declaration, para. B(iii) in *The Meissen Agreement Texts* (London: CCU, 1992); cf. *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant: Common Statement of the Formal Conversations between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England* (Peterborough and London: Methodist Publishing House and Church House Publishing, 2001), Affirmation 4.

God's plan for and gift to His Church.¹⁵ In accordance with this teaching, ordination to one of the three orders of ministry by a bishop whom the Church of England can recognize as standing within the historic succession is necessary for ministry in the Church of England. Similarly, the threefold order, with (in the words of the fourth criterion of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral) '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'¹⁶ is a precondition for full communion with the Church of England. This was explained in the 'Appeal to all Christian People' by the 1920 Lambeth Conference as follows:

'It is not that we call into question for a moment the spiritual reality of the ministries of those communions which do not possess the Episcopate. On the contrary we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace. But we submit that considerations alike of history and of present experience justify the claim which we make on behalf of the Episcopate.'¹⁷

The Church, both lay and ordained, is essentially apostolic, deriving from the sending of Christ and sharing in His mission.¹⁸ Salvation through Jesus Christ is communicated through baptism, by which a sinner is united to the Triune God through Christ and to the Church, the communion of saints.¹⁹ The faith of the Church is faith in Jesus Christ, who is known both in word (Scriptures and preaching) and in the sacraments and ordered worship.²⁰ This is a faith which is mediated through the human witness of Christians and communities, in writings and in acts in time and space, something which owes its capacity for conveying the gospel of salvation to Christ and the Spirit. There is a succession of faithfulness, witness and life, of which the bishop is the sign – a succession called apostolic; 'Ordination denotes entry into this apostolic and God-given ministry'.²¹ The question of apostolicity touches the nature of the body in which one is ordained:

'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.'²²

Christian Perseverance

¹⁵ ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 32: 'Ministry and Ordination', para. 6; Preface to the Ordinal.

¹⁶ The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, (d): Resolution 11 of the 1888 Lambeth Conference.

¹⁷ 'An Appeal to All Christian People from the Bishops Assembled in the Lambeth Conference of 1920': Resolution 9 of the 1920 Lambeth Conference.

¹⁸ ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 31: 'Ministry and Ordination', para. 4. Meissen Declaration para 15 (viii), Porvoo Common Statement, paras 36-40 in *Together in Mission and Ministry* (London: Church House Publishing, 1993), Reuilly Common Statement para 36 in *Called to Witness and Service* (London: Church House Publishing, 1999).

¹⁹ FAOC/12/3, paras 7-10; ARCIC II, *Salvation and the Church*, pp. 1, 14-15: paras 1,9,11, Meissen Declaration para 15 (iv), Porvoo Common Statement, para 32(g), Reuilly Common Statement 32(f). ARCIC uses the term 'koinonia' (1 John 1.3) or communion to denote the mystery of the Church (*Final Report*, p. 6: Introduction, para. 5) and it is the basic concept used to give account of the mystery of the Church. See ARCIC II, *Church as Communion* (London: Church House Publishing, 1991), *passim*.

²⁰ The local church is 'a gathering of the baptized brought together by the Apostolic preaching, confessing the one faith, celebrating the one eucharist, and led by an apostolic ministry. This implies that this local church is in communion with all Christian communities in which the essential constitutive elements of ecclesial life are present. (ARCIC II, *Church as Communion*, p. 28: para. 43).

²¹ ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 36: 'Ministry and Ordination'

²² The Porvoo Common Statement in *Together in Mission and Ministry* (London: Church House Publishing, 1993), para. 50. See also Reuilly Common Statement paras 33-40.

Perseverance in the faith received and proclaimed and in the administration of the sacraments is needed if a body is to be seen as a church. Clearly, a body which had remade itself frequently or altered its expression of faith frequently would raise a question as to its faithfulness to the faith of the Apostles. A body which had separated from another church and where the wounds of such separation continued to determine its life and utterance would not evince a life of the Catholic Church. The Faith and Order Commission's concern with Christian perseverance has developed from earlier work by the former Faith and Order Advisory Group in 2009, in an unpublished report to the House of Bishops on 'continuing churches' in England.²³ The issues may be summarized as concerning:

- stability in the faith,
- stability more generally, and
- *caritas*.

The question of the faith of the body concerned has already been discussed above, but the question of whether it has remained **stable in the faith** which it professes also needs to be addressed.

Questions also need to be asked about the body's **stability more generally**. Bodies led by *episcopi vagantes* have often been marked by an instability whereby their identity frequently changes. The same has also been true of some 'continuing churches'. There have been shifting alliances between different groups, schisms relating to personalities, and re-ordinations of bishops in a quest for greater assurance as to Orders. Where there is such instability 'Christian perseverance' cannot be recognized.

Even where this is not the case, the Church of England would be reluctant to take the step of recognizing the Orders of a church without assuring itself that there was likely to continue for the foreseeable future to be a church of the same name with a substantial number of people, congregations and clergy. This question is related to that of the length of time that a church has existed, yet is distinct from it. Newly formed churches may enjoy a fundamental stability despite some movement of members and clergy; older churches may develop significant instability and experience substantial defections without thereby forfeiting the character of a church. In the case of a newly formed church an important question is whether its trajectory seems to be towards increasing unity, stability and density or towards disintegration.

'Christian perseverance' involves not just stability in the faith and stability more generally but also whether the life of the church concerned is marked by the need and search for the gifts of the Spirit and the theological virtues. In particular, does it seek the bond of all virtues, *caritas*? This criterion may be put negatively: is it marked by a self-definition which is *substantially* negative?²⁴

In many churches actions are taken and statements made to which exception may be taken.²⁵ What needs to be taken account of in assessing this criterion is not individual actions and statements but the overall character of a church's daily life and witness.

²³ 'Questions about Continuing Churches' (HB(09)4).

²⁴ Cf. 'Questions about Continuing Churches' (HB(09)4), p. 5; FAOC/12/3.

²⁵ Cf. The Porvoo Common Statement, p. 12, para. 20: 'The Church is a divine reality, holy and transcending present finite reality; at the same time, as a human institution, it shares the brokenness of human community in its ambiguity and frailty. The Church is always called to repentance, reform and renewal, and has constantly to depend on God's mercy and forgiveness.'

Churches are, on occasion, critical of other churches. They do not thereby forfeit their character as churches. What is important is that the church comes to express any criticism clearly and charitably, and that such criticism is merely part of a stance of the church concerned, rather than determinative of its whole life and character.

The questions may be summarized thus:

- Is the body's self-definition substantially positive (about what it is) rather than negative (concentrating on what it is not)?
- Is the body so consumed by negativity towards others that the Christian virtue of charity cannot be recognized in it, and its character as a Christian church is thereby corroded?

B: RECOGNITION OF ORDERS

In addition to the ecclesial conditions noted above, if orders conferred in a church with which the Church of England is not in communion are to be recognized by the Church of England as duly conferred, certain conditions must be satisfied concerning the individual seeking recognition and the ordination itself. These were expressed as follows in the unpublished Faith and Order Advisory Group report mentioned above:²⁶

‘that the minister of ordination must be a bishop, himself validly consecrated, the recipient must have been baptized, the right matter must be used which is the laying on of hands, and the right form which consists of words of prayer reverting to the special gift and showing the object of the laying on of hands’.²⁷

For present purposes these conditions may be summarized under the following headings:

- baptism;
- minister of the rite;
- historic succession;
- prayer and laying on of hands;
- the rite used; and
- the distinctive gift.

Baptism

The subject needs to have been baptised with water in the name of the Holy Trinity at the time of the ordination. (In order to be ordained deacon or priest in the Church of England it is also necessary to have been episcopally confirmed,²⁸ but the Church of England recognizes the orders of clergy ordained in other churches who had not previously been episcopally confirmed.)

Minister

The minister of the rite needs to have been ordained episcopally. Yet this is not on its own sufficient to urge recognition. As ‘ministry is in and for the community’,²⁹ the bishop needs to

²⁶ ‘Episcopi Vagantes and those ordained by them’ (BMU/FO/80/13).

²⁷ BMU/FO/80/13, para. 10.

²⁸ Canons of the Church of England, Canon C 4.1.

²⁹ ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 37: ‘Ministry and Ordination’, para. 14.

be a bishop in and for a church and a church which can, all failings in communion notwithstanding, be recognised as such. The rite of ordination is not just the rite of two individuals, an ordinand and a bishop, effective because of a power proper to the bishop as an individual, but is performed faithfully when the one ordaining has his authority to do so in virtue of an office of the Church. Ordination is an act of the Church, which the ordaining bishop performs on behalf of the church.³⁰ The ordination needs to be evidently an ordination to ministry in the Church of God, not to a particular and limited function.

Historic succession

The bishop needs to be in the historic succession.³¹ The church which witnesses to the faith received owes her identity to a transmission in history of witness and teaching; the succession of bishops is an effective sign of this transmission.³² Without a community of apostolic faith to serve, bishops lose their *raison d'être*.³³ This is why they should give evidence of their ordination in a public rite in the body from which they have come and of their acceptance by the people in that rite.

Prayer and laying on of hands

Commonly referred to as the form and matter of ordination,³⁴ prayer and laying on of hands derive their authority from scriptural testimony.³⁵ Although scholars would argue that it is the ordination prayer as a whole which is the prayer meant, the compilers of the ordinals of 1550 and 1661 and older commentators on them understood the formula that accompanies the laying on of hands³⁶ to be the prayer in question. This does not affect the question of whether the rite can confer orders.

The prayer must pray for the gift of God which is from the Holy Spirit and for the grace for the work of the office and for the holiness of the minister being ordained;³⁷ the identity of the office needs to be clear in the rite, whether deacon, priest or bishop.

The hands are those of the bishop and, for the ordination of a bishop, those of the other two bishops normally required for the ordination of a bishop. Though the normativity of ordination of a bishop by three bishops is not in doubt, ordination by one bishop only is not necessarily an ordination which cannot be recognized, the example of ordinations to the episcopate by Augustine of Canterbury being worthy of note.³⁸

³⁰ 'Ministry and Ordination', para. 14; House of Bishops Occasional Paper, *Bishops in Communion: Collegiality in the Service of the Koinonia of the Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), p. 11.

³¹ ARCIC, *Final Report*, pp. 38, 43: 'Ministry and Ordination', para. 16; 'Ministry and Ordination: Elucidation', para. 4; *Bishops in Communion*, p. 12.

³² ARCIC, *Final Report*, pp. 37-8: 'Ministry and Ordination', para. 16; ARCIC II, *Church as Communion*, p. 23: para. 33; *Bishops in Communion*, p. 14ff.

³³ *Church as Communion*, para. 32.

³⁴ The terms belong to scholastic sacramental theology common to the Church in the west since the thirteenth century.

³⁵ 1 Tim 5.22; 2 Tim 1.6-7; ARCIC, *Final Report*, pp. 31-2: 'Ministry and Ordination', para. 5.

³⁶ E.g. from the Ordinal of 1550 for priests: 'Take thou authority to preach the word of God, and to minister the holy Sacraments in this congregation', changed in 1662 to 'Receive the Holy Ghost, for the Office, and work of a Priest, in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; And whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and of his Holy Sacraments'; or, in 1662 for bishops, 'Receive the holy Ghost, for the office and work of a Bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands'.

³⁷ See ARCIC, *Final Report*, pp. 36-7: 'Ministry and Ordination', paras 14-15.

³⁸ BMU/FO/80/13, para 23; FAOC(11)23.

The laying on of hands needs to have been connected to the saying of the prayer by the bishop. In earlier Anglican ordinals the laying on of hands was accompanied by the ‘formula’ of ordination.

Special gift

The gift of order is not a gift which is derivable simply from the baptismal priesthood, but is a gift which differs in kind.³⁹ The rite needs to give evidence that such a gift is being asked from God for the one being ordained.

The rite used

The rite used has to be one which is adequate to its purpose. The rite used by a body in which orders have been given needs to be one in which the Church of England can recognize the ministry which she has received and intends to continue. It is not sufficient for the candidate to be ordained to a ministry called ‘deacon’, ‘priest’ or ‘bishop’, regardless of the content that the church concerned understands those ministries to have. It needs to be clear from the rite and from other relevant formularies that the ministry envisaged is one that the Church of England can recognize as diaconal, priestly or episcopal. The rite needs to show that the body which is using the rite intends to continue the ministry of the word and sacraments in accordance with Christ’s institution and the Church’s rule. It needs to be demonstrable that what is intended in it is what the church does.

In addition to these six conditions, the understanding of ordination must also include the belief that the nature of ordination means that it is irrevocable and unrepeatable.⁴⁰

C: DISCERNMENT IN AN ANGLICAN AND ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

Decisions about the Church of England’s recognition of other churches as churches, its recognition of their Orders, and its relationships with them must in the end be taken in accordance with the Church of England’s own principles and its own law. The fact that another church (Anglican or of another tradition) has recognized a body as being a church, has recognized its Orders, has established ecumenical relationships with it or has entered into communion with it does not in itself require the Church of England to take any positive decision in respect of it – any more than other churches, within the Anglican Communion or in other traditions, are obliged to act in accordance with the Church of England’s decisions in such matters.

However, the Church of England does not take its decisions in a vacuum. Where other episcopal churches (and especially other Anglican churches) have recognized a body as a church, have received its ministers into their own ministry without re-ordination, have entered into formal ecumenical relationships with it or established communion with, or have taken a formal decision not to do one or more of these things, those are factors that the Church of England ought to take into account, along with the criteria previously mentioned, in coming to its own decision.

Commitment on the part of the body concerned to good relations with other churches, and still more to the visible unity of Christ’s Church, is another indicator to be taken into account

³⁹ ‘Their ministry is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit’ (ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 36: ‘Ministry and Ordination’, para. 13; cf. p. 41: ‘Ministry and Ordination: Elucidation’, para. 2; FAOC(11)23.

⁴⁰ ‘Ministry and Ordination’, para. 15; see above.

along with the other criteria (though it would be difficult to maintain that the absence of such commitment was in itself proof that the body could not be recognized as a church).

In taking decisions about whether another body can be recognized as being a church, the Church of England should itself manifest an ecumenical spirit. It will be important not simply to take the self-definition and statements of other bodies at face value without interrogating them, but equally, it will be important not to compromise the Church of England's own Christian charity by adopting a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' that tends always to think the worst of others rather than the best, or to expect of other churches higher standards of perfection than are manifested by our own church or others with which we are already in communion.

III: THE ORDINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Where someone who was previously ordained in another church not in communion with the Church of England has been accepted for ministry in the Church of England and cannot be judged to have been episcopally ordained priest or deacon in a church whose Orders are recognised by the Church of England, it will be necessary for him or her to be ordained by a bishop of the Church of England. This part of the paper explains why a bishop may judge that he or she should be ordained conditionally rather than absolutely.

A. Conditional Ordination

The term ‘conditional ordination’ refers to the conduct of the rite of ordination when there is a doubt as to whether Orders have previously been conferred on the subject. The element of conditionality may be expressed in the rite itself, by the addition of a conditional clause (‘if you have not been ordained’), or by a public statement to that effect prior to the celebration of the rite. A conditional ordination is not a second ordination.

The common belief of Christendom has been that ordination, like baptism and confirmation, may only be given once.⁴¹ It may be given by a bishop who should not be officiating or who teaches falsely, but such an ordination is an ordination. As Bishop John Wordsworth of Salisbury (1843-1911) put it, ‘Clergy validly ordained by a degraded or heretical Bishop cannot be reordained’.⁴² The numerous instances where it has occurred notwithstanding, the reiteration of ordination has traditionally been regarded as sacrilegious. Although there were examples in the early medieval West of ordinations being repeated, it would seem that the majority of such cases are to be ascribed either to the abuse of political power or to the view that the earlier ordination was null on account of schism, heresy or simony. The view that ordination could only be given once was received by the Church of England at the Reformation effectively without demur.⁴³

To repeat baptism or ordination is more than mere ‘bad form.’ It is a serious sin knowingly to do this because it shows a lack of faith and trust in the working of God in his Church. The reason for such a severe view of this matter is twofold. First, the seal given in the rite, in those cases shaping and orientation to the gift of Christ, is placed in doubt and therewith his fidelity to those who are the object of saving work. Second, because baptism and ordination both reflect and effect the unique and once-for-all offer of God in Jesus Christ, they can only be given once.⁴⁴

There is nothing in the law governing the Church of England or in its liturgy which explicitly provides for conditional ordination, although there is provision in the Book of Common Prayer for conditional baptism. In the seventeenth century there were writers of the Church of England who appealed to the form of conditional baptism as the basis for a form of conditional ordination.⁴⁵ Moreover, there are reasons which are moral, and compellingly so,

⁴¹ Classically found in St. Augustine, *Contra Epistulam Parmeniani*, II.13.28.

⁴² John Wordsworth, *Reordination: A Review of ‘Les Réordinations’, par l’abbé Louis Saltet*, (Salisbury: Brown and Co, 1908), p. 18. The author is credited with the text of *Saepius Officio*, the response in 1897 of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the condemnation of Anglican orders by Pope Leo XIII.

⁴³ It has been argued that Thomas Lancaster, bishop successively of Marlborough and Kildare, was already ordained bishop when he was consecrated Archbishop of Armagh in 1568, but if so, this was a single exception to otherwise uniform practice.

⁴⁴ ARCIC, *Final Report*, p. 37: ‘Ministry and Ordination’, para. 15.

⁴⁵ ‘Examples given by Bishop Edgar Gibson in ‘Memorandum on Conditional Ordination’, (Lambeth Conference 1930, paper 46, 10th June 1920, pp5-6.

why it is right in particular cases to include appropriately an indication of conditionality in the administration of the rite, so as to avoid reiteration and to assure the good interests of the Church and her mission in word and sacrament.

It has to be acknowledged that from the perspective of some ecumenical partners that conditional ordination seems very much like re-ordination and can be ecumenically painful. The reason for what may seem to some a second ordination is that the Church of England is seeking the confidence that what makes an ordained minister a minister has been faithfully prayed for and received, that the ordination has been administered rightly. The reason for the expression of a condition is in order to avoid the appearance of the repetition of something that can only be given once.

Reasons for ordaining conditionally include:

- doubt as to form and fact (i.e. whether the rite was sufficient to be an ordination rite to the ministry as the Church of England teaches or whether the minister of the rite was a bishop in apostolic succession and so capable of ordaining);
- doubt as to whether some essential part of the rite of ordination was omitted or celebrated in bad faith;
- doubt as to whether the subject was in good standing with the church;
- that certainty about the faith or the ecclesiological status of the church in which the ordinand was ordained cannot be reached.

It is important to note that for the Church of England, as for the Roman Catholic Church, the simple and correct celebration of the rite of ordination is not sufficient to remove grounds for doubt that the orders so conferred should be recognized.⁴⁶

It is important that conditional ordination is not administered solely in order to satisfy the conscience of the person being ordained. Ordination or its lack and the church or its deficiency are, at least in substantial part, public and objective realities. The Roman Catholic Church stipulates that there must be ‘prudent doubt’ that an earlier administration was truly made.⁴⁷ Any case where conditional ordination is under consideration therefore requires serious preparatory investigation. Although there is always a danger that one may be over-scrupulous in such matters, the most prudent course of action needs to be followed. This clearly follows from the good interests of the visible Church and the need to avoid sin.⁴⁸

The use of conditional as opposed to absolute ordination is called for by the unity and peace of the Church, where there is doubt about ordination, but where it is clear that possible gifts of the Spirit in earlier and public ministerial practice should be acknowledged in the one being ordained.

B. Absolute Ordination

Where there is no element of doubt that the candidate has not been episcopally ordained – for example, because he or she was ordained in a non-episcopal church – an absolute ordination will be necessary.

⁴⁶ E.g. the case of the Vatican judgment on the ordinations performed by Archbishop Pierre Martin Ngô Đình Thục.

⁴⁷ Dz 1151.

⁴⁸ This is the way known as tutorism. In 1679 Pope Innocent XI taught that ‘Therefore, one should not make use of probable opinions only in conferring baptism, sacerdotal or episcopal orders’ (Dz 1151).

As already indicated in section II of this paper, such a conclusion does not call into doubt the spiritual reality of the ministry that has been exercised. It merely recognizes that the minister concerned has not previously had the episcopal ordination which, since 1662, the Church of England has invariably required of its ministers in accordance with its own teaching and for the sake of its own integrity.

Where an absolute ordination of someone who has previously been ordained in another church occurs, it is appropriate that the reality of that ministry should be expressed by a public statement at the beginning of the rite of ordination. (The terms of such a statement would, of course, be different from what would be appropriate where the ordination is conditional).

C. Information and Pastoral Care

Where a candidate for ministry in the Church of England has not been episcopally ordained (and must therefore be ordained absolutely), and also where the candidate believes him or herself to have been episcopally ordained but the Orders of the church concerned cannot be recognised and accepted by the Church of England (and the candidate must therefore be ordained either absolutely or conditionally), it is essential that the position and the reasons for it are made clear to the candidate at as early a stage as possible and that appropriate pastoral care is given. It is the responsibility of the bishop to ensure that this occurs.

✠CHRISTOPHER COVENTRY
Chair
Faith and Order Commission

21st February 2014

ANNEX

CHURCHES IN COMMUNION WITH THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

A working [list of churches in communion with the Church of England](http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/supplementary-material.aspx#Head1-136) is printed in the Supplementary Material to the Canons of the Church of England

<http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/supplementary-material.aspx#Head1-136>

OTHER CHURCHES WHOSE ORDERS ARE RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

This list is given in good faith, but does not constitute a definitive ruling. Under section 6 (2) of the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967, ‘If any question arises whether, for the purposes of this Measure, a Church is in Communion with the Church of England or whether the Orders of any Church are recognised and accepted by the Church of England, it shall be determined by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, whose decision shall be conclusive.’

The list is based on past decisions of the Archbishops either to give permission for ministry in the Church of England to clergy ordained in the church concerned or that, if clergy ordained in the church concerned wished to enter the ministry of the Church of England and were found to be suitable for such ministry, permission would be given.

The non-inclusion of a church in this list should not be taken as passing any adverse judgement on their Orders. It may simply result from the fact that there is no record of any cleric ordained in that church seeking to enter the ministry of the Church of England.

Churches whose Orders are recognised and accepted by the Church of England

The Roman Catholic Church⁴⁹

The Church of England in South Africa⁵⁰

The Free Church of England⁵¹

⁴⁹ Historic practice since the Reformation.

⁵⁰ Longstanding practice.

⁵¹ Decision by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2012, on advice from the Faith and Order Commission and after consultation with the Standing Committee of the House of Bishops.