

## Anglican Consultative Council Report to General Synod

### ACC-18: The Five Marks of Mission Today and Tomorrow

The 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) took place in Accra, Ghana from 12-19 February 2023, immediately following the February Group of sessions of the Church of England General Synod.

#### What is ACC?

The ACC is one of the four instruments of the Anglican Communion - the other three being the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates' meeting and the Lambeth Conference. Of the four, the ACC is the only one that includes the laity.

The role of the ACC is to facilitate the co-operative work of the Anglican Communion, exchange information between the provinces and churches, and help to co-ordinate common action. More information can be found here: [ACC \(anglicancommunion.org\)](https://www.anglicancommunion.org)

The ACC is the group of representatives, lay, clergy and bishops, of the 42 provinces (member churches) across the world-wide Anglican Communion. It meets roughly every three years, and this year was hosted by the Anglican Province of West Africa with practical support from the Diocese of Accra.

Each province has either two or three representatives. The current representatives from the Church of England are the Rt Revd Graham Usher (Bishop of Norwich), Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) and Canon Mrs Jane Evans (Leeds).

Participants are invited to gather together for prayer, worship, Bible study and discussion on matters of common concern, to promote the unity and purposes of the churches of the Anglican Communion in mission, evangelism, ecumenical relations, communication, administration and finance.

A vital part of the ongoing life of the ACC, outside of the triennial meeting, is a range of networks and commissions, populated by people from throughout the Communion, and addressing a wide range of issues, from the environment to peace and justice, evangelism and discipleship to building a safer church. Prayer, resource-sharing and sharing stories of good practice are key parts of the work of the networks and commissions.

### ACC-18: The Five Marks of Mission Today and Tomorrow

The agenda for ACC-18 was organised around the five marks of mission, which were originally developed by the ACC from 1984-1990. They express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. They are:

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1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

At ACC-18, these were translated into the daily themes of Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure. Reports and presentations from the networks and commissions, the opportunity to discuss, share and feedback on the issues presented, and resolutions for further work formed the main part of the programme. All was wrapped in prayer, with the daily offices four times a day, often incorporating hymns, chants and prayers from different cultures, as well as opening and closing services and a special service of reconciliation (see below). In-depth Bible studies dug into the early parts of Mark's gospel, especially passages which show Jesus and the disciples serving God's mission. A combination of testimonies and exegesis around each passage prompted discussion in our multi-cultural and multi-national groups, and set the scene for the rest of the day.

**Day by day**

ACC-18 opened with the presidential address from the Archbishop of Canterbury during which he stressed the key role of the laity in ACC, the importance of unity and interdependence in contrast to individualism, and emphasised that no one group in one part of the world can or should order the lives of others. For the full text, visit [Archbishop of Canterbury's Presidential Address at ACC-18 | The Archbishop of Canterbury](#),

**Teach**

The first full day's sessions, around the first mark of mission, heard presentations on intentional discipleship, theological education and the Science Commission. A theme, which recurred in other parts of the meeting, was the need to move away from seeing the Anglican church as 'western' or 'European' or 'a colonial construct' and ensuring applicability to local context. Practical steps to achieve this include developing resources in local languages and making theological education more widely available.

The meeting considered a timely project by the Inter-Anglican Standing Committee on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO), *Good Differentiation*, which explores questions such as: what is meant by being in communion for Anglicans? How might decisions be made that protect our proper diversity without deepening our divisions? If we seek to walk together, can we also respect one another's needs for differentiation when conscience demands?

A session by the Safe Church Commission urged all churches in the Communion to adopt safe church policies and practices, providing resources and training materials in support of

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this aim and promoting a definition of the ‘vulnerable adult’ as key to enhancing the safety of all persons in our churches.

The success of *Thy Kingdom Come* was presented and celebrated: the global prayer movement was started by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2016, and in 2022, churches in 172 countries participated. Churches, diocese and provinces were encouraged to take part between Ascension and Pentecost in May 2023.

A recurring topic of general discussion was inevitably the Church of England’s General Synod resolution on Living in Love and Faith. In a dedicated fringe meeting, the Archbishop of Canterbury sought to give the background to six years of work on the Living in Love and Faith process which had led up to the Synod debate, and emphasised what we had resolved, what we had not resolved and what further work lay ahead. There were expressions of disapprobation from some ACC members, followed by the post-meeting announcement from the Global South fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA) around the Church of England’s decision on blessings for people in same-sex relationships. The whole tone of the meeting was very positive, with great warmth shown to Archbishop Justin, and the LLF decisions did not dominate discussions.

***Tend***

A number of networks (the International Anglican Women’s Network, the Inter-Anglican Family Network, Anglican Health and Community Network and the Anglican Alliance) described their work in connecting and coordinating the Anglican voice in response to the need to care for, build up and give a voice to women and families, build resilience in churches in the face of natural disasters, provide a co-ordinated Anglican voice on health issues, promote safe migration and combat human trafficking. It was observed that people are vulnerable because of poverty, natural disasters, un- or under-employment and human greed.

Considering matters of unity, faith and order and interfaith relationships, parallels were drawn between ecumenical/interfaith dialogues and inter-Anglican relationships, and posed the question, ‘How is the Lord leading Anglicans into new ways of speaking to each other?’ References to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians drew out lessons on how to hold differences together while being called to a common profession of faith, posited that unity does not equal uniformity and stressed the need to value diversity if we are to achieve unity.

***Transform***

During a session on gender justice and the role of women both within the church and in wider society, delegates were challenged to consider how the church might better seek greater equality for women, asking how the voices of women might be heard more loudly in Anglican churches, dioceses and provinces. The difficult subject of violence against women

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was raised, with the disturbing fact that one in three women globally will be subject to abuse in their lifetime, the majority of cases being within the home. Australian research showed that the prevalence of domestic violence within the Anglican Church is the same as outside it.

In a clear expression of the desire to work with and intentionally learn from other denominations, a panel of ecumenical partners, including some of those with whom the Anglican Communion has bilateral relationships (Lutheran, Catholic, Old Catholic) and some multi-lateral partners (World Council of Churches, Global Christian Forum) shared their understandings of what it means to be in communion. Two reports produced by the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOD) were presented: *Stewards of Creation: a hope-filled Ecology* and *Living well, Dying well: our Sure and Certain Hope*.

### **Treasure**

The session on the environment was always bound to energise and engage members. Both Bible study and presentations invited us to consider the effects of climate change on the most vulnerable parts of the world, including geographies such as the island nations of the Pacific, which are “sinking” into the sea, and disadvantaged groups of people, including indigenous peoples from many parts of the globe. Several different Communion-wide bodies and networks are working on environmental issues. Initiatives such as the Communion Forest ([Communion Forest – Sustain and Renew](https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/at-the-un.aspx) - launched at the Lambeth Conference in 2022) and the provision of materials for “green sermons” and other church services can enable awareness-raising at local level, while advocacy at the UN by the Anglican Alliance aims to win policy change. Further information and policy papers are available on the Anglican Communion website (<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/at-the-un.aspx>)

A point of celebration at ACC-18 was the participation by young people. At the last ACC meeting, there had been no functioning youth network, but following a resolution to re-start the network, work was now in hand to equip and motivate young people, by praying together, enabling the voices of young people to be heard in the instruments of the Communion, and sharing information, skills and resources. An ultimate aim was to facilitate young people into adult ministry.

### **The transatlantic slave trade**

The work programme was punctuated by some moving and difficult discussions about the transatlantic slave trade. A fringe meeting led by the Rt Revd Dr David Walker, Bishop of Manchester, First Church Estates Commissioner Alan Smith and Gareth Mostyn, CEO of the Church Commissioners, presented the Church Commissioners’ proposal to create a £100m new fund to invest for a better and fairer future for all, particularly for communities

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affected by historic slavery. Feedback and questions included: why the figure of £100m? What sort of investments? And what about other forms of slavery, including indentured labour from East Africa?

The fringe set the tone for a visit the following day to Cape Coast, previously the capital of Ghana and the site of a fortress owned at one time by the British to house hundreds of enslaved people in appalling conditions, prior to their transport across the Atlantic to the plantations of the United States and the West Indies. Many found the visit harrowing, not only the conditions in which the enslaved people were kept, but particularly the fact that a church sponsored by the Society for the Proclamation of the Gospel was directly above the dungeon, and worshippers would have unavoidably heard the cries and smelled the stench of the people imprisoned below. The visit was immediately followed by a service of reconciliation, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Cape Coast Cathedral.

### Elections

**Canon Maggie Swinson**, former General Synod member and Lay Canon of Liverpool Cathedral, was elected Chair of the Standing Committee of the ACC.

**The Most Reverend Hosam Naoum**, Archbishop of Jerusalem was elected Vice Chair.

Six new standing committee members were elected:

- **The Right Reverend Mugenyi William Bahemuka**  
*The Province of the Anglican Church of Congo*
- **The Reverend Inamar Correa de Souza**  
*Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil*
- **The Reverend Tsz Leung Billy Ip**  
*Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui*
- **Canon Andrew Khoo Chin Hock**  
*The Anglican Church of the Province of South East Asia*
- **Aishi Sama Drong**  
*The Church of Bangladesh*
- **The Reverend Wendy Scott**  
*The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia*

### Resolutions

The ACC passed 23 resolutions and a further six statements of support. These can be viewed here: [https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/495903/en\\_acc18\\_resolutions-and-statements-of-support.pdf](https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/495903/en_acc18_resolutions-and-statements-of-support.pdf)

### Next meeting

The next meeting of the ACC will take place in Ireland in 2026.

The Rt Revd Graham Usher  
The Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone  
Canon Mrs Jane Evans