

FWM Report to General Synod 2019

Appendix 2: Statement from the Anglican Church of Canada – United Church of Canada Dialogue

EXPLANATORY NOTE/BACKGROUND

Christians in the Anglican and United Church traditions in Canada have been working together in witness, mission, service, and education for nearly one hundred years. For nearly fifty years (from 1972 to 2016) we have been engaged in focused bilateral dialogues, seeking to grow as churches in our God-given unity in Christ. These conversations have continued to reveal the obstacles and challenges which remain between us – especially in the areas of ministry and polity – and how they hinder our pursuit of full visible unity. However, the many progress reports and study documents which the Dialogue has produced along the way have also enabled our churches to say a great deal about what we do recognize in one another and affirm together as communities of faith in the Body of Christ.

The present iteration of the Anglican-United Church Dialogue began in 2017, and is ongoing. The members appointed to the dialogue are all keenly aware of the ways in which new developments and decisions in our churches have ecumenical implications. In particular, the Dialogue understands that many Anglicans have paid close attention to the recent geographical and jurisdictional restructuring of United Church polity which has been unfolding in 2018-19, and to the ways in which these emerging structures will be able to carry out the task of pastoral and apostolic oversight in response to new questions and challenges. The uncertainty that this time of transition has produced understandably calls into question, for some, what the future directions and possibilities for Anglican-United dialogue and partnership will be.

At this significant period in the histories of our churches, the members of the Dialogue believe that it is important remind ourselves of the many shared convictions and mutual recognitions which our two churches have expressed together in previous dialogue documents and reports, and to restate these again in a succinct and declarative way. The aforementioned *Statement of Mutual Affirmations and Commitments* (See Appendix) does not purport to resolve any of our outstanding differences, nor to arrive at any new agreement. However, in light of the great potential and continuing need for partnership in the responsibilities and callings of reconciliation, mission, and ministry which continue to lie before us in this land in the 21st century, it is critical to have renewed clarity about the substantial foundation on which we stand, and from which we desire to move forward in shaping our future relations. For the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada and the General Council Executive of the United Church of Canada to receive this *Statement*, and to reaffirm its content, is an opportunity to do precisely that.

Anglican Church of Canada-United Church of Canada Dialogue
Statement of Mutual Affirmations and Commitments
February 2019

Christians in the Anglican and United Church traditions in Canada have been working together in witness, mission, service, and education for nearly one hundred years. For the last fifty of those years we have been engaged in focused bilateral dialogues, seeking to grow as churches in our God-given unity in Christ. While recognizing that differences remain between us, the great potential for partnership in reconciliation, mission, and ministry that continue to lie before us in the 21st century presents us with an opportunity to remind ourselves of the many important mutual recognitions which our two churches have made with one another in previous dialogue documents and reports, from 1972 to 2016. Therefore, on this basis, and at this important time in our histories, we, the Anglican Church of Canada and The United Church of Canada, make the following reaffirmations and commitments, and rededicate ourselves to live them out as fully as possible:

1. Affirmations

- a. “[B]eing united in the belief that God has created one Church, which is the fellowship of all those who in response to God’s forgiving love have been incorporated into Christ through baptism and through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, we gratefully recognize one another as part of the body of Christ, and individually members of it.” (**Plan, ¶1**)
- b. “We stand together in faith in Christ and in hope of the kingdom he proclaimed and inaugurated; together we embrace the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and the apostolic and historic creeds of the undivided church; we celebrate the sacraments of the new covenant [baptism and holy communion]; together we recognize the obligation of witness and service to our nation and the world.” (**Principles, Section II, as quoted in TMROM, ¶15**)
- c. “We recognize that both our churches intend to be the faithful community of Jesus Christ, visible in the world, gathering sinful and broken people in response to his gospel as it is proclaimed in both word and sacrament.” (**TMROM, ¶18**)
- d. “Ministry is the defining activity of the Christian community, which begins with baptism, the ministry of all the baptized.” (**St. Brigid, p. 38**) Additionally, some Christians are called to ordered ministries, “entrusted by the Church with special responsibilities, [and] are answerable to it for their ministries.” (**Plan, ¶72**)
- e. “The church’s diversity of gifts and ministries calls for a ministry of coordination and oversight, or *episkopé*, so that these gifts may enrich the whole Church, its unity and mission.” (**TCTCV ¶152, as quoted in CTUM, p. 11**) “We recognize in each other’s governance these gifts of oversight, whether they are embodied in individuals or in councils. Further, we recognize that both of our churches practice diffused power and centralized power. While mindful of our differences concerning *episkopé*, we agree that they ought not to hinder our cooperation in service to the world God loves.” (**CTUM, pp. 11-12, 15**)
- f. Further, we celebrate the many ways we already share deeply in ministries across Canada: in ecumenical chaplaincies, congregations, educational centres, and outreach; in shared advocacy for justice, peace and healing; and in our commitments to ecumenical coalitions and in our active support of and participation in ecumenical councils, local, national, and international. (**St. Brigid, p. 7**)

2. Commitments:

We commit to continue to grow together in unity and mission through the many means available to us. We will strengthen our commitment to one another through:

- Continuing to pray with and for one another.
- Establishing a national coordinating committee for unity and mission between at least our two churches. **(CTUM, Rec. 1)**
- Supporting the current and future work of reconciliation, particularly with Indigenous peoples. **(CTUM, Rec. 1)**
- Inviting participation of members from each other's churches on parallel program and mission committees and task groups. **(CTUM, Rec. 1)**
- Promoting the sharing of physical and human resources between our two churches at local, regional and national levels. **(CTUM, Rec. 1)**
- Supporting existing Ecumenical Shared Ministries, and encouraging such ministries as positive choices, both for congregations and for outreach and mission projects in urban, suburban, and rural areas. **(St Brigid, Rec. 2)**
- Continuing our dialogue about *episkopé*, with the goal of mutual recognition of the office of oversight in each church's polity, using the resources of global ecumenical dialogues to assist our efforts. **(CTUM, Rec. 2)**
- Using the Lund Principle "as a touchstone for our continuing work as two churches, exhorting us to act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately." **(CTUM, p. 18)**

Documents Cited:

Plan = *Plan of Union and ByLaws*, The Anglican Church of Canada; Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada; The United Church of Canada (Approved 1972)

TMROM = *Towards the Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministry* – Report of the Joint Task Force on Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministry (1983)

St. Brigid = *Drawing from the Same Well: The St. Brigid Report* – A Report of the Anglican-United Church Dialogue, 2003-2009

TCTCV = *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (World Council of Churches, 2013)

CTUM = *Called to Unity in Mission: A Report of the Anglican Church of Canada-United Church of Canada Dialogue* (2012-2016)