

Called to Unity in Mission

**A REPORT OF THE
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA-
UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA DIALOGUE**

2012-2016

PREFACE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

In today's Canada, where churches face numerous questions, a dialogue between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada is both tremendously valuable and profoundly challenging.

Our two churches are close cousins, both in contemporary manifestations and in historical origin. We work together on many projects and live side by side one another in communities throughout the country. This proximity requires that we continually reflect on the ways that we can act in concert, even as it presses us to clarify our differences. The ongoing task is framed by the Lund Principle, which calls us to do together all that we can, acting separately only when "deep differences of conviction" compel us to do so—a principle which is itself only a contemporary formulation of the biblical means of identifying the church: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Living out of this principle demands that we take seriously our own identities, neither maximizing the differences out of a misplaced pride, nor minimizing them in an effort to reach a too-quick accommodation. This is not an easy task, placing us as it does between the desires of people who see a need for a common response to the urgent challenges of shifting cultures and declining numbers on the one hand, and those who find the answers to these complexities in the riches of their respective denominational heritages, on the other.

The members of this dialogue have toiled as faithfully as we are able in an effort to be both honest and generous, so that members of both churches may find themselves truly represented in our discussions while simultaneously being challenged by one another to consider new possibilities.

As co-chairs, we have been deeply blessed by the extraordinary richness of collegial life experienced in this dialogue group. The loving, careful, and determined work of the members has been a true means of grace to us and, we believe, to the church as a whole. For this, we thank all who have participated. We also offer thanks to all who have hosted us or visited with us; we have met with generosity everywhere and our work is stronger for your contributions.

Perhaps most importantly, we express our appreciation to the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada for being willing to enter into formal dialogue. We pray that this report will be a helpful step on our common journey as people of God.

Yours in Christ,

The Ven. Dr. William H. Harrison
Anglican co-chair

The Rev. Dr. Andrew O'Neill
United Church co-chair

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada enjoy a long-standing and close relationship as ecumenical partners, both nationally and in communities across this land.

As national churches this relationship has often involved formal, bilateral ecumenical conversations aimed at giving expression to Jesus' desire that his disciples be one for the sake of the world. Among these conversations was a comprehensive series of talks that took place over several years, concluding in 1975, which had as its goal a full structural merger of the two churches. This goal was not achieved.

While full visible unity of the church remains the goal of the whole ecumenical movement, in recent decades we have recognized that organic union between churches is not the only way to give it expression. This recognition is in part what led to the establishment of a new round of dialogue between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada in 2003. These new conversations helped reveal "the breadth and depth of our common life as churches,"¹ even though we had not been in direct dialogue for nearly three decades. The fruits of these talks are detailed in *Drawing from the Same Well: The St. Brigid Report* (2009), which is available on the websites of both churches.

For all our commonalities as churches, the 2003-2009 round of dialogue also revealed and named anew some of our very real differences, particularly in the ways we express doctrine, order ministries, and administer sacraments. Acting on the recommendations of the *St. Brigid Report*, it was agreed in 2010 that the dialogue's work would continue, with a particular focus on these particular theological questions. The dialogue's membership was also adjusted to reflect this shift in focus.

This round of Anglican-United Church dialogue met once annually between 2012 and 2016:

- May 14-17, 2012 at the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, Toronto, ON
- January 21-24, 2013 at Carey Theological College, Vancouver, BC
- January 13-16, 2014 at the Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, BC
- January 26-29, 2015 at Queen's House, Saskatoon, SK
- February 1-4, 2016 at Villa St-Martin, Montreal, QC

All of the meetings were residential. Members of the dialogue engaged not only in theological discourse, but also shared meals, enjoyed social time, and shared in common worship together. Such a holistic approach to ecumenical dialogue has demonstrated that theological insights and our communion in Christ are as likely to be revealed in an informal chat over coffee as they are in a structured academic exchange around a meeting table.

The dialogue concluded each meeting by gathering around the Lord's table, with ordained members of the dialogue taking turns presiding at the eucharist according to their ecclesial tradition, and with a dialogue member from the other tradition preaching. In so doing we both experienced something of each other's liturgical traditions and received a foretaste of the unity in faith and eucharistic fellowship that is our desire and Christ's will for his church.

¹ *St. Brigid Report*, p. 8.

What follows is in a sense only a snapshot of the official conversations between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada since 2012. This report outlines the broad strokes of the dialogue's recent work, highlights points of convergence, and names areas where differences remain. It concludes by making a set of recommendations that calls our churches to both act more intentionally on the fundamental agreement in the faith we already share, and to continue engaging with the theological issues still preventing us from a full exchange of ministries.

***Members of the Anglican Church of Canada-
United Church of Canada Dialogue
2012-2016***

Anglican Church of Canada

The Rev. Dr. William Harrison (co-chair)
The Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen (ELCIC)
The Ven. Dr. Lynne McNaughton
The Rt. Rev. Michael Oulton (2015-16)
The Rev. Dr. Paula Sampson (until 2015)
The Rev. Stephen Silverthorne
The Ven. Bruce Myers OGS (staff)

United Church of Canada

The Rev. Dr. Andrew O'Neill (co-chair)
The Rev. Dr. Sandra Beardsall
The Rev. Alf Dumont (2013)
The Rev. Elisabeth Jones
The Rev. Donald Koots
The Rev. Dr. Will Kunder (2015)
Mrs. Brenda Simpson (2015-16)
Dr. Gail Allan (staff)

2. FAITH, ORDER, AND MINISTRY

Creeds

The *St. Brigid Report* reflects upon the nature and role of doctrine in our respective ecclesial communities. In that context it briefly addresses the creeds, those ancient and authoritative statements of faith received by both our churches.² This phase of the dialogue returned to the matter of creeds in order to address their status and use in worship, as part of our conversation about sacraments and their meanings.

We are aware of multiple uses of creedal statements in our churches. They serve as common expressions of belief, symbols that open our minds to mystery, liturgical reminders of the ancient faith tradition in which we are formed, hermeneutical boundaries for interpretation of the holy scriptures, and reflections of individual and communal religious experience.

We are able, in the spirit of the 1972 *Plan of Union*, to affirm the foundational and defining nature for our churches of the ecumenical statements of faith and the Apostles' Creed received from the ancient church. We affirm that they tell the story of salvation as recorded in the scriptures, witness to the apostolic faith, and provide a bond of union with Christians of all times and places.

Our churches also affirm the use of accepted contemporary statements and affirmations of faith in the teaching and worship of our churches. These contemporary expressions of faith are understood to be in essential agreement with, and to stand in the tradition of, scripture and the witness of the ancient creeds. As the *St. Brigid Report* noted, these contemporary affirmations of faith "are intended to be elucidations of Christian understanding for the contemporary world and, as such, are regarded as consistent with the ancient creeds rather than as changes or replacements."³ It should be noted that within the time frame of this round of dialogue, the United Church authorized the use of four "standards subordinate to scripture," which include the original Twenty Articles of Doctrine in the Basis of Union of 1925, the 1940 Statement of Faith, and two more recent standards which are used as creedal affirmations in worship and the life of the church.⁴

Sacraments

The previous round of this dialogue recommended further conversation between our two churches on their respective understanding of the sacraments. In doing so we recognized that in the last few decades the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada have both moved toward celebrating the sacraments more often and making them more central to our worship life.

The two sacraments instituted by Jesus, baptism and holy communion, are recognized and celebrated in both churches. The main points of discussion centred on the relationship of the sacraments to our liturgical practices and who has the responsibility for their administration.

Both churches recognize the sacraments as liturgical actions that bestow grace and are for the whole church. It is also recognized that various rituals and traditions have a sacramental nature to them, creating sacred spaces where God is encountered. There is also general agreement that the normative practice is that trained and ordained persons preside at the sacraments. Both churches also require an

² *St. Brigid Report*, p. 21.

³ *St. Brigid Report*, p. 21.

⁴ *The Manual of The United Church of Canada* (2013 edition), p. 11.

office of oversight to licence those whom the church has set apart for the administration of sacraments. The difficult conversations in this round of dialogue, in talking specifically of holy communion, centred not on the gift of the sacrament itself but on matters connected to this sacrament, including:

- the recognition of who has the authority to preside at celebrations of the eucharist, and who grants that authority. For example, in the United Church of Canada, “designated lay ministers” and “sacraments elders” may be licensed to preside at celebrations of holy communion even if they are not ordained;
- the training and standards normally required for an individual to be recognized as a eucharistic presider. For example, in the Anglican Church of Canada, one can be ordained a priest with relatively little theological or pastoral formation, at the discretion of the local bishop;
- the challenges posed for Anglicans by Ecumenical Shared Ministries served by a United Church minister or an ordered minister of another church body not in a full communion agreement with the Anglican Church of Canada.

Conversations on these matters need to continue. Nevertheless these discussions should not overshadow the responsibility of our churches to nourish and pastorally care for all those who presently need the gift of life that flows from word and sacrament.

Ministry

Ministry has been a lively topic of fundamental significance in Anglican-United Church conversations over the decades. While ministry takes many forms in our churches, this dialogue group decided to begin its conversations with the presbyteral ministry—those who exercise a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care. The dialogue took up two aspects of the vast topic of ministry: the question of interchangeability of ministries, and the proposal in the United Church of Canada to move to “one order” of ministry.

Interchangeability of ministries

The mutual recognition of ministries—and their consequent interchangeability between churches—continues to be a pressing question for local Anglican-United Church partnership, particularly in congregations that are formal Ecumenical Shared Ministries. This round of the dialogue recognized the need to explore what steps could be taken to make a mutual exchange of ministries between our two churches normative. Realizing that this would represent a deepening of our conversation, we requested a brief extension of the length of our mandate, and the addition to our number of one member of the Anglican House of Bishops and one United Church judicatory representative. As a result, the Rt. Rev. Michael Oulton, Bishop of Ontario, and the Rev. Dr. Will Kunder, Executive Secretary of Manitou Conference, joined the dialogue group in 2015.

Desiring to learn from other ecumenical conversations, we first studied a draft of the 2014 report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM), *Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches*.⁵ That document discusses at length the interchangeability of ministers. It is generally agreed in the ecumenical movement that one of the criteria of visible unity is a single, interchangeable ordained ministry. The Joint Implementation Commission of the Anglican-

⁵ Available at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102827/Into-All-The-World-AMICUM-Report-2014.pdf>.

Methodist Covenant between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England explains interchangeability as “a situation in relations between churches whereby the ordained ministers of one church are eligible to be appointed to ministerial offices in the other without undergoing re-ordination. The ministerial orders or ordinations of each of the churches concerned are mutually recognized as meeting all the requirements of the other for its own ministry.”⁶

However, the AMICUM report noted that this interchangeability relies, for both Methodists and Anglicans, upon the presence of ministries of personal *episkopé* in both churches. Our dialogue was therefore unable to pursue dialogue toward interchangeability without a deeper discussion of *episkopé*. (See below.)

‘One Order of Ministry’

An area of confusion for Anglicans has been the wide variety of officially designated ministries in the United Church of Canada, which go by many names and several of which include functions Anglicans would normally associate with the presbyterate, such as presiding at the eucharist. The members of the dialogue therefore followed with hopeful interest the evolution of “A Proposal for One Order of Ministry” that emerged out of the 2012 meeting of the General Council of the United Church of Canada.

Dialogue members discussed at length a draft of the “One Order” document. While recognizing that this is an internal conversation of the United Church of Canada, the group saw that this proposal also offered possibilities for strengthening clarity about ordered ministry both within the United Church and among ecumenical partners. The dialogue was grateful for the opportunity to prepare a formal submission about “One Order” to the United Church of Canada as a part of its discernment process.

We acknowledged in that submission that the context from which the “One Order” proposal emerges is one shared by both of our churches, as well as others in Canada. Our denominations are struggling to provide adequately formed ministers of word, sacrament, pastoral care, and service at a time when a variety of models of training for ministry are necessary in order to meet changing mission needs.

We are encouraged to see a commitment in the “One Order” proposal to retain the language of ordination to describe the ministerial office being suggested. As it notes, a broad consensus has emerged about the nature of ministry in the wider church, thanks in part to ecumenical convergence texts like *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. Therefore, all efforts to understand ordered ministry within the United Church of Canada as part of the global Christian community, the one church of Christ, are to be encouraged. The use of such common language as “ordained ministry” helps open the way for broader discussions about ministry with other churches, including the Anglican Church of Canada. We are also heartened to see the traditionally close association the proposal envisions between the one order of ministry and the administration of sacraments, particularly the eucharist.

There is much in the United Church’s proposed one order of ministry that Anglicans can recognize. Like Anglican priests, these United Church ministers would be ordained, be accountable, administer sacraments, and also exercise a variety of ministries. A move in such a direction would not only advance our two churches’ ongoing conversation about mutual recognition of ministry, it would also help normalize some of our existing relationships in contexts such as Ecumenical Shared Ministries.

In bringing clarity to its own categories of ministry, the United Church of Canada will also be creating new possibilities for deepening conversations with ecumenical partners about the mutual recognition of

⁶ *Into All the World*, p. 27.

ministries. We were also encouraged by the way in which this proposal would further help the church's ministers to respond to the rapidly changing mission context in which they are called to serve.

It is the dialogue's view that "A Proposal for One Order of Ministry" represents a significant step along the way, and we were pleased that at its 42nd General Council in 2015 the United Church of Canada chose to pursue this path by sending the proposal to a process of remit within the church. An eventual mutual recognition of ministry between our two churches, which "One Order" would help facilitate, will further reveal that unity of a church in and for the world.

Episkopé: *Unity, continuity, order, and service*

Our conversations deepened our appreciation for the faithfulness of each church's Christian witness, and lent greater urgency to Christ's prayer that his followers be one. However, our deepening conversations also revealed the importance of several differences in the specific ways we engage Christ's mission as churches. We recognized that this is particularly true in our ordering of ministry and sacraments, and especially in the divergent ways our churches exercise the ministry of oversight (sometimes referred to by the Greek biblical word *episkopé*).

Our shared commitment to *episkopé*

Our two churches represent the significant divergence that occurred in the sixteenth century between ecclesial traditions that retained an historic, personal episcopate and those that developed conciliar models of oversight, vesting the functions of *episkopé* within elected bodies and revolving leadership models. In dialogue, however, we recognized that even in the matter of oversight, there is much that we share.

The World Council of Churches, in its recent convergence text produced by the Commission on Faith and Order, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, makes a strong case for the exercise of *episkopé* regardless of church structure:

The Church, as the body of Christ and the eschatological people of God, is built up by the Holy Spirit through a diversity of gifts or ministries. This diversity calls for a ministry of coordination so that these gifts may enrich the whole Church, its unity and mission. The faithful exercise of the ministry of *episkopé* under the Gospel by persons chosen and set aside for such ministry is a requirement of fundamental importance for the Church's life and mission.⁷

The specific development of structures of *episkopé* in the churches varied in different times and places; but all communities, whether episcopally ordered or not, continued to see the need for a ministry of oversight. In every case *episkopé* is in the service of maintaining continuity in apostolic faith and unity of life. In addition to preaching the word and celebrating the sacraments, a principal purpose of this ministry is to faithfully safeguard and hand on revealed truth, to hold the local congregations in communion, to give mutual support, and to lead in witnessing to the gospel.

Such guidance includes the oversight of the various Christian service organizations dedicated to bettering human life and to the relief of suffering, aspects of the Church's service (*diakonia*) to the

⁷ *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, ¶152. The entire document is available here: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision>.

world. Our two churches already collaborate in many such ministries, maintained by *episkopé*: local shared congregational ministries; campus, military, hospital and prison chaplaincies; KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, and the Canadian Council of Churches. We continue to work together in the crucial task of responding to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

In the course of our dialogue we acknowledged that we recognize in each other's governance the gifts of oversight described in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, whether they are embodied in individuals (such as bishops) or in councils (such as conference and presbytery). We noted and affirmed particular gifts in each church: conciliarity and "connexionalism" in the United Church of Canada, and the personal episcopate and clear principle of succession in the Anglican Church of Canada. Further, we recognize that both of our churches practice diffused power and centralized power, and both experience a tension—sometimes creative, sometimes conflictual—between these diffusive and centralizing approaches.

We also acknowledge and recognize the gift of oversight expressed in the recent developments in both our churches intended to foster Indigenous self-determination in the organization of communities of faith and the raising up of ordained leadership. In the United Church of Canada this takes the form of the All Native Circle Conference and the current dialogue with Indigenous stakeholders in the reconfiguration from a four- to three-court structure. In the Anglican Church of Canada this kind of oversight is exercised in part through the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, the office of the National Anglican Indigenous Bishop, and the recently established Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh.

Nevertheless our churches have yet to reconcile or mutually recognize these common and divergent gifts. The dialogue members are well aware that the 1970s failure of church union, and the 1980s failure of the Anglican-United Church Mutual Recognition of Ministries Task Force, were significantly due to different understandings of historic episcopacy. It was therefore our goal to understand as clearly as possible these differences, and to ask if these differences are "church dividing."

Anglican perspectives on *episkopé*

The historic episcopate at the core of Anglican ecclesial identity and is linked to the Anglican understanding of the good news of Jesus Christ. This ministry is exercised by bishops in conversation with the whole community of the church.

At the heart of the Anglican understanding of *episkopé* is a firm commitment to the visible church as a participation in God's kingdom. Episcopal ministry is apostolic, and in several ways: as a symbol of continuity in the faith; as maintenance of unity with the historic church; as means of unity with the whole church today, worldwide; and as vehicle for the exercise of oversight within the church in specific times and places. Bishops are to sustain a community which makes possible common gospel mission in the midst of differences imposed by historical location. The laying on of hands a new bishop receives at ordination symbolizes continuity in the historic line of episcopacy, the bishop's place in the larger community of the church, and an empowering for leadership in the church's mission.

The laying on of hands, therefore, serves as a reminder that the apostolic ministry can only proceed through God's power. The Holy Spirit creates the unified body of the church and strengthens us with power to participate in Christ's mission in the world. The Holy Spirit takes our community and uses it to build the divine community which is God's kingdom. Bishops are both a symbol of this community and a means to accomplish it.

As a consequence of its larger place in the Christian community, episcopacy includes pastoral and administrative leadership in the church. Anglicans resist understanding bishops as essentially functionaries, focusing instead upon the transformation in character (understood by many Anglicans as being an ontological change) that occurs with ordination to the episcopate, and stressing the importance of the symbolic place of bishops in the life of the church.

For these reasons, the Anglican Communion has included “the historic episcopate, locally adapted” as one of the four characteristics that both identify Anglicans and inform Anglican ecumenical expectations as expressed in the 1888 Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral.⁸ The other three are: the Holy Scriptures, the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds, and the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. The gospel significance of episcopacy for contemporary Anglicanism is evident in its inclusion with these other faith-defining elements.

The language of “locally adapted” has become ever more decisive since the Quadrilateral’s formation in the nineteenth century. Today there is significant diversity in the ways that episcopal office is exercised throughout the worldwide Anglican Communion. The Anglican Church of Canada regards itself as being *episcopally led* and *synodically governed*. This recognizes the pivotal roles of bishops in leading the church as it seeks to know and fulfil its gospel mission. At the same time the statement conveys the centrality within Anglican polity of synods, which include both lay and ordained members, in orienting the church’s life.

Rarely can a synod proceed with an initiative without the bishop’s concurrence. Similarly, bishops have limits placed on their authority by synods. Therefore this (admittedly imperfect) form of church government attempts to have built-in checks and balances.

Synods govern at the levels of the diocese (local), ecclesiastical province (regional), and the General Synod (national), bodies Anglicans recognize as having their parallels in the United Church of Canada’s presbyteries, conferences, and General Council. In similar ways, Anglican synods establish policy and chart a direction for their respective sphere of the church. Diocesan synods have a particular responsibility in electing new bishops through a process of open nominations and voting by secret ballot.

The synodical approach to making decisions in the church is a contemporary way of reflecting the Anglican heritage of strong lay participation in governance, dating to sixteenth century England, when royal authority in the church was seen as the lay balance to episcopal authority.

Episcopal leadership, with both its powerful symbolism and its centrally active role in the life of the church, is exercised within the whole body of Christ and in consultation with the members. The meaning of episcopal leadership is discovered in the ways that the church community responds to, and supports, the work of the bishops. Although bishops have at their disposal some means of discipline, at its best a diocese functions communally and collaboratively, energized and directed by the leadership of its bishop.

Out of this perspective, the Anglican Church of Canada’s members of this dialogue invite the United Church of Canada to reflect on two questions, which may serve as grounds for further conversation:

⁸ Available at <http://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/lambeth-quadrilateral>.

1. Where, within the revised structures of the United Church of Canada envisioned by the “One Order” and “Comprehensive Review” proposals, is the ministry of *episkopé*—ensuring unity, continuity and ordering of the church’s life and ministry—to be found?
2. How does the structure and ministry of the United Church of Canada reflect the “historic episcopate”? Are there particular individuals who hold offices in which the ministry of *episkopé* is made manifest?

United Church perspectives on *episkopé*

The United Church of Canada is deeply informed by its Presbyterian heritage in its theology of *episkopé*. Early Canadian Presbyterians sometimes spoke of their church’s polity as having a “divine nature.” United Church members therefore do not just happen to have a conciliar model of governance; they hold it as a treasured value. Over the centuries the presbyterial model, rooted in the earliest church councils (for example, the “pillars of the church” described by Paul in Galatians 2:9), has come to define an ecclesial tradition as much as to serve it.

The United Church of Canada has complex local, regional, and national structures that are intended to share the work of oversight, discernment and power as widely as possible, and to carry out the many functions of *episkopé* effectively, including ordination, and (at present) commissioning to the diaconal ministry and recognizing designated lay ministers; oversight of ministry persons and congregations; administration; pastoral care of persons and congregations; and missional visioning.

Because of its deeply held theology of broad inclusivity, the United Church has developed a kind of “knee-jerk” suspicion of personal *episkopé*. As dialogue members representing this tradition, we recognize that our church may have been impoverished by this reluctance to see the benefits of some elements of *episkopé* residing in a person who has been called, chosen by the faithful, and set apart to give ongoing spiritual and temporal leadership. We have heard the call of our Anglican counterparts to receive this gift.

We can imagine a place for such leadership in the United Church of Canada. For example, the United Church might consider lengthened terms for Moderators and Conference Presidents (those who are elected to office with the laying on of hands), or their equivalent in the revised structure, and/or we can envisage a more defined and recognized role for past Moderators. Similarly, we can imagine the reshaping of some executive or resource positions at the regional levels of our church into covenanted ministries with more authority to act.

As United Church dialogue members we would like to investigate such possibilities more deeply. Since our church is in a time of restructuring, we think there might be some openness to such innovations. At the same time, we invite clarification by Anglicans of the conciliar accountability of those who exercise a personal *episkopé*. We need to be able to perceive this synodical accountability, just as Anglicans need to be able to perceive unity and continuity in United Church oversight.

Moving forward on *episkopé*

Recognizing how much we share, admonished and intrigued by the possibility that each of us may benefit from receiving the gifts of the other, we thus recommend that dialogue continue to wrestle with the conditions that would permit a closer relationship between our two visions and practices of *episkopé*. We know that nowhere in the world do Anglicans practice formal transferability of ministries

with non-episcopal churches. But we also know that our strong history of collaboration in gospel witness in Canada over many decades places us to be in the vanguard of finding a way forward. We pray that this aspect of our dialogue will continue.

Our conversations revealed the depth of conviction and theological integrity behind these differences, and thus revealed them as current challenges to full communion between us. They are matters of deep concern which touch on our identity as diverse members of Christ's body, and thus create a tension which cannot quickly be resolved. We were challenged to recognize that more time and gracious reflection are required before agreement on these matters can be reached.

While mindful of these differences, our conviction is that they ought not to hinder our cooperation in service to the world God loves. Instead, a greater cooperation presents not only the opportunity for more faithful service, but also an opportunity for deeper understanding between us.

3. UNITY AND MISSION

Throughout this round of dialogue there has been affirmation that our two churches share a common faith, context, history, geography, and commitment to God’s mission in the world. Discussions on ministry, sacraments, creeds, doctrine, polity, authority, and oversight have brought us to clearer understandings of “bearable anomalies”—ecclesial differences that need not be church dividing—and an appreciation of the gifts and charisms each church offers.

By fostering better understanding and respect for each church’s particularities, the dialogue asserts that as much as we already do together, there is more of God’s mission in this land and beyond to live into collaboratively. This understanding is shared by our current national leaders. The Moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Rt. Rev. Jordan Cantwell, and the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, met together on January 6, 2016, the Feast of the Epiphany.

Their conversation expressed an affinity for working locally and nationally on issues of common mission, especially regarding Ecumenical Shared Ministries, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and more sharing of resources by our national church structures. This recognition of being witnesses and disciples of a shared call to God’s mission has drawn us still closer together.

Challenge and opportunity

Throughout the life of the current iteration of this dialogue, the United Church of Canada has been engaged in a large-scale review of its organizational structure and the manner in which it orders its ministries. This concurrence of circumstances has created both opportunity and challenge for the dialogue.

The challenge has been in the fact these are very much live questions in process within the United Church, and keeping pace with the evolving discussion within the denomination has not been easy for a dialogue that has met only once annually.

Nevertheless, opportunity has come in the chance for our bilateral conversations about orders and sacraments to feed into the United Church’s internal discernment on these matters. In written submissions to both the Comprehensive Review Task Group and the “One Order of Ministry” proposal (see appendices), the dialogue sought to offer encouragement and affirmation concerning the United Church of Canada’s relationship with the wider *oikoumene*.

In particular, the Anglican-United Church dialogue encouraged the Comprehensive Review Task Group to discern how and where the oversight, authority, support, and accountability of *episkopé* would be retained in a newly structured polity. Our bilateral discussions revealed that the more clearly *episkopé* can be recognized within a denomination’s polity and structures, the easier it is for ecumenical partners to work more closely in ministry and mission.

With respect to the “One Order of Ministry” proposal, the dialogue affirmed what it saw as a clarification emerging around the United Church’s understanding not only of the order of ministry, but also of the relationship between ordination and the administration of the sacraments.

In each case, the bilateral dialogue’s contributions to ongoing United Church conversations have been made with an eye toward recognizing signposts on the way to the goals of mutual recognition of ministry and full communion. Our encouragement and affirmation of these two processes within the United Church of Canada have been made with a sense of hope for greater unity between our churches.

It is noteworthy and encouraging when one church allows an ecumenical partner to speak into its own internal discernment on important matters such as this. Speaking—and hearing—the truth in love requires a significant level of maturity and trust, no less between churches than between individual Christians.

Unity in mission

Unity and mission are two sides of the same coin. Visible unity—as the Lund Principle points out, and as our churches have affirmed time and again—is the means by which the church reveals its true nature and more effectively fulfils its true purpose, namely participation together in God’s mission in and for the world.

This intrinsic link between mission and unity has been a guiding principle of all of the conversations between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada. When our two churches were negotiating a formal merger in the 1970s, it was for the sake of mission: “We desire that union should make possible more effective participation in God’s mission both in Canada and throughout the world.”⁹

The *St. Brigid Report* named “the centrality of unity-in-mission to the life of the Christian Church and, therefore, to ecumenical endeavour.”¹⁰ Internationally, conversations between Anglicans and Methodists (one of the United Church of Canada’s founding streams) unambiguously insist, “visible unity in a common mission must be our goal.”¹¹

We have been admonished and guided in this shared conversation concerning “visible unity in a common mission” by the Indigenous members of this dialogue. Both our churches are committed to living into the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and doing so will have implications for us at the level of ministry, *episkopé*, and shared witness and mission.

In this latest round of conversations we have reaffirmed the foundational and defining nature for our two churches of the Christian scriptures and the ecumenical statements of faith received from the ancient church. On the basis of this fundamental agreement in the faith, our churches can—and should—engage more deeply still in common mission.

The remaining differences about how our churches order their ministries are relatively minor when compared to the vast deposit of faith we share in common, and when considered against the needs of the world. As-yet-unresolved disagreements about ministry and sacraments must not provide a convenient excuse for our churches failing to collaborate more fully in our common mission of proclaiming the gospel, making disciples, responding to human need, seeking peace, justice, and reconciliation, and safeguarding the integrity of creation.

The Lund Principle emerges 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 them to act separately.” This dialogue has served to remind us that the deep differences of conviction which separate the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada are few indeed. Therefore the recommendations of this round of our bilateral dialogue include a call to both of our churches to more intentionally and more fulsomely *act together*.

⁹ *Plan of Union*, ¶18.

¹⁰ *St. Brigid Report*, p. 55.

¹¹ *Into All the World*, ¶26.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Acknowledging our fundamental agreement in a common faith, our churches must engage more deeply in common mission.** We recommend the following concrete expressions of this unity in mission:
 - Establishing a national “coordinating committee for unity and mission” between at least our two churches;
 - Supporting the current and future ecumenical work of reconciliation, particularly with Indigenous peoples;
 - Inviting participation of members from each other’s churches on parallel program and mission committees and task groups;
 - Promoting the sharing of physical and human resources between our two churches at the local, regional, and national level, including a shared national office.

2. **Pursue the way forward on mutual recognition of ministry between our two churches.** We recommend building on the existing work of these conversations in the following ways:
 - Continuing the dialogue about *episkopé*, with the goal of the mutual recognition of the office of oversight in each church’s polity, drawing on the work of recent ecumenical agreements elsewhere;
 - Developing the dialogue further concerning the mutual recognition of ordained ministries;
 - Exploring ways to involve conversation partners who have particular wisdom to offer on these theological issues.
 - Renewing the Ecumenical Shared Ministries Task Force.

APPENDIX 1:

**A Response to A Proposal for 'One Order of Ministry'
from the Dialogue Between the United Church of Canada
and the Anglican Church of Canada**

Saskatoon, January 29, 2015

In 2012 the official dialogue between the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada began focusing its work on “an examination of the doctrinal identities of the two churches and the implications of this for the lives of the churches, including understandings of sacraments and orders of ministry.”¹ This mandate has coincided with the United Church’s own internal discernment around the establishment of a single order of ministry known as the ordained ministry.

The members of the dialogue have followed with hopeful interest the evolution of “A Proposal for One Order of Ministry,” and discussed at length the draft of the document dated December 18, 2014. While recognizing that this is an internal conversation of the United Church of Canada, we are also conscious that our two churches are actively searching for new pathways toward a mutual recognition of our ministries, and this process offers a potential inroad in that direction. Therefore there is much in the aforementioned iteration of the proposal that the members of the dialogue find encouraging and wish to affirm.

We first of all acknowledge that the context from which the “One Order” proposal emerges is one shared by both of our churches, as well as others. Our denominations are struggling to provide adequately formed ministers of word, sacrament, pastoral care, and service at a time when a variety of models of training for ministry are necessary in order to meet changing mission needs.

It is encouraging to see a commitment to retain the language of ordination to describe the ministerial office being proposed. As the One Order document notes, a broad consensus has emerged about the nature of ministry in the wider church, thanks in part to ecumenical convergence texts like *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. Therefore all efforts to understand ordered ministry within the United Church of Canada as part of the global Christian community, the one church of Christ, are to be encouraged. The use of such common language as “ordained

ministry” helps open the way for broader discussions about ministry with other churches, including the Anglican Church of Canada. We are also heartened to see the traditionally close association the proposal envisions between the one order of ministry and the administration of sacraments.

There is much in The United Church’s proposed one order of ministry that Anglicans can recognize. Like Anglican priests these United Church ministers would be ordained, be accountable, administer sacraments, and also exercise a variety of ministries. A move in such a direction would not only advance our two churches’ ongoing conversation about mutual recognition of ministry, it would also help normalize some of our existing relationships in contexts such as ecumenical shared ministries.

In bringing clarity to its own categories of ministry, the United Church of Canada will also be creating new possibilities for deepening conversations with ecumenical partners about the mutual recognition of ministries. We are also encouraged by the way in which this proposal would further help the church’s

¹ Resolution A139-R2, 2010 General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.

ministers become nimble as they respond to the rapidly changing mission context in which they are called to serve.

When the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada were negotiating a formal merger in the 1970s, it was for the sake of mission: “We desire that union should make possible more effective participation in God’s mission both in Canada and throughout the world.”² Though organic union is no longer our goal, we still strive for visible unity in common purpose, vision, and mission.

An eventual mutual recognition of ministry between our two churches will help reveal that unity of a church in and for the world. It is our view that “A Proposal for One Order of Ministry” represents a significant step along the way, and we would encourage The United Church of Canada to pursue this path.

² Plan of Union, ¶18.

APPENDIX 2:

**A Word to the Comprehensive Review Task Group
from the Dialogue Between the United Church of Canada
and the Anglican Church of Canada**

February 2015

Since 2003 the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada have been engaged in a fruitful dialogue aimed at exploring how our two churches might draw still closer together to be more effective agents of God's mission in and for the world.

These conversations have included the similar and different ways in which our churches order their ministries and structures. Particular attention has been paid to the diverse ways our denominations exercise the ministry of *episkopé*, which we together understand to include elements of oversight, authority, support, and accountability.

This reflects the growing ecumenical consensus about this vital aspect of the church's ministry: "In every case *episkopé* is in the service of maintaining continuity in apostolic life and unity of life. In addition to preaching the word and celebrating the sacraments, a principal purpose of this ministry is faithfully to safeguard and hand on revealed truth, to hold the local congregations in communion, to give mutual support and to lead in witnessing to the gospel."¹

In its previous round of conversations this dialogue was able to conclude that "we find the ministry of *episkopé* present in its fullness in both the Anglican Church of Canada (especially in the ministry of bishops) and The United Church of Canada (especially in the ministry of presbyteries and conferences)."²

As the Comprehensive Review Task Group continues its work leading up to the General Council in August, it is our hope that this ministry of *episkopé* will be clearly retained and perhaps expressed even more plainly in whatever new courts/structures will emerge. The more clearly *episkopé* can be recognized in the structures of the United Church of Canada, the easier it becomes for ecumenical partners in Canada and beyond to work more closely together in mission.

The members of this dialogue therefore encourage the Comprehensive Review Task Group to keep a discerning eye on those places where *episkopé* will be located in whatever new structures it proposes, particularly in the light of the deepening agreement in the wider *oikoumene* about how this ministry of oversight and unity, authority and support, accountability and witness, is expressed in the structures of our churches.

¹ *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), ¶52.

² *Drawing from the Same Well: The St. Brigid Report*, p. 23. Available at www.unitedchurch.ca and www.anglican.ca.