



A MINISTRY OF UNITY  
FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON EPISCOPE  
IN THE ANGLICAN AND UNITED CHURCHES  
IN CANADA

A Study Text Produced by the  
Anglican Church of Canada/United Church of Canada  
Dialogue  
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# INTRODUCTION

## How did we get here?

1. Issues of polity, governance, and the exercise of authority have been among the most central challenges in the ecumenical dialogue between the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) and the United Church of Canada (UCC) at every stage in their evolving relationship. In particular, the question of how each church can fully embrace the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministers and ministries without there being major adjustments to their respective polities — particularly around matters such as ordination and the oversight of congregations — has been the primary stumbling block which has prevented further steps towards the goal of full visible communion for many decades. At the crux of this challenge are different ways of configuring what the New Testament calls the ministry of “episcopate”, or “oversight”, as well as questions about the relationship between the form this ministry takes and its role in preserving the continuity of what is traditionally called “apostolic succession.” Nevertheless, our churches have remained committed to keeping this conversation going and to continuing to pursue ways forward. This present text is offered as a further step on the journey.

2. There can be a temptation in ecclesiological discussions across denominational lines to slip into focusing too much on the particular forms and terminologies of ministry and polity without keeping the more fundamental realities of what they point to and seek to embody in mind. When this happens, dialogues sometimes get stuck. Fortunately, much work has been done in international ecumenical contexts over the last four decades on these precise subjects identified above, and a brief review of some key points of ecumenical consensus in this regard is in order here at the outset of this study.

3. The World Council of Churches document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM)<sup>1</sup> was instrumental for clarifying the meaning of words like ‘apostolic’, ‘apostolicity’, and ‘apostolic succession’. BEM emphasized that the full meaning of apostolic succession in fact refers to the extent to which a church “lives in continuity with the apostles and their proclamation.”<sup>2</sup> The whole Church, therefore, is understood to be seeking to persevere in apostolic succession whenever it witnesses to the faith, proclaims the gospel, celebrates the sacraments, passes on the tradition of ministerial responsibilities, works together, cares for those in need, seeks unity, and shares its gifts with others.

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1. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

2. BEM, 35.

4. Nevertheless, BEM also made clear that there is a broad ecumenical consensus around the fact that this work of “preserving and actualizing the apostolic faith” is, in a special way, “entrusted to the ordained ministry.”<sup>3</sup> In the language of the New Testament itself, and through subsequent developments in Church history, this aspect of the Church’s life was defined as the “ministry of episkope,” or the ministry of oversight.<sup>4</sup> BEM acknowledges that this ministry did admit to some degree of variety in form in its earliest expressions. However, it also recognizes its close historic association in many Christian traditions with the specific office and order of ministry which bears its name — i.e. the episcopacy/historic episcopate. Thus, BEM explicitly states: “Succession of bishops became one of the ways, together with the transmission of the Gospel and the life of the community, in which the apostolic tradition of the Church was expressed.”<sup>5</sup>

5. The report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on the Episcopate of 1987, commonly called *The Niagara Report* (Niagara),<sup>6</sup> further explored the implications of the understanding of the role of the historic episcopate. Niagara also affirmed that apostolic succession occurs in the Church whenever the Gospel is proclaimed through word and sacrament. Therefore, apostolic succession is recognized as being enacted whenever the message of the apostles is proclaimed in each generation. Again, however, *Niagara* is careful not to diminish the fact that the office holders of episcopacy/historic episcopate did frequently carry out, in a unique and personal way, significant elements of the ministry of episcopate, “serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the apostolic faith and communion.” In other words, as in BEM, there has been a high degree of ecumenical consensus on the point that offices of episcopacy commend themselves because of the way they have often been an important means of ensuring that apostolic succession is preserved in the Church.

6. It is also critical here, especially for our purposes, to repeat BEM’s equally important ecumenical conclusion that “a continuity in apostolic faith, worship and mission has been preserved in churches which have not retained the form of historic episcopate.”<sup>8</sup> In such a case, oversight to ensure the continuity of apostolic succession is understood to take place through other ministerial offices. *The Niagara Report* also clearly states that “apostolic succession in the episcopal office does not consist primarily in an unbroken chain of those ordaining to those ordained, but in a succession in the presiding ministry in the church, which stands in the continuity of the apostolic faith.”<sup>9</sup> This office may be a highly important sign and instrument of such succession, but it does not contain it exclusively. It is this focus on the means of continuation in apostolic succession in churches both with and without the

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3. BEM, 35.

4. BEM, 19-21.

5. BEM, 36

6. *The Niagara Report: Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on the Episcopate 1987*, (London: Church House Publishing, 1988).

7. BEM, 36.

8. BEM, 37

9. Niagara, 94. This same conviction was essential in arriving at *The Waterloo Declaration* which established a relationship of full communion between the ACC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).

historic episcopate that is central to how our churches understand the ministry and office of episcopate today.

7. With both of our churches having received this international ecumenical work, and seeking to draw upon it, the ACC and UCC have been able to affirm together that a ministry of episcopate, which is responsible for ensuring succession in the apostolic continuity of the Church, is being exercised in both churches.<sup>10</sup> However, it has also been readily acknowledged by our two churches that this ministry of episcopate is located in and exercised through some quite different forms in their respective contexts.<sup>11</sup> This diversity has continued to be seen as a substantial challenge to further ecumenical progress.

## Where are we now?

8. For Anglicans, episcopate is understood to be pre-eminently located in and exercised by the person of the bishop. As such, Anglicans have commonly viewed the personal and historic episcopacy — i.e. leadership by bishops in historic succession through time and space — as a central part of what it means to carry on in continuity as the Church, and as an essential element in the pursuit of relationships of full communion with other churches. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of the Anglican Communion explicitly names identification of “the historic episcopate locally adapted” as a necessary characteristic, from an Anglican perspective, to any relationship of full communion with another church.<sup>12</sup>

9. The polity of the United Church of Canada, by contrast, has typically had concerns about individual and personal expressions of this ecclesial authority, and has thus been structured in such a way that oversight or episcopate operates primarily through conciliar and communal bodies. Today, with the new structures emerging, this includes especially the Regional Councils and the Office of Vocation, and formerly would have been the Presbyteries and Conferences.<sup>13</sup>

10. Despite the presence of these diversities, and the challenges they pose, our dialogue is of the opinion that they do not rule out the possibility of finding steps towards different ways of emphasizing particular elements of a larger mutually accepted truth (i.e. a “differentiated consensus”)<sup>14</sup> in this area. Differentiated consensus has become a technical term in the literature of ecumenism, referring to a methodology of identifying differences as complementary rather than contradictory — as different ways of emphasizing elements of a larger mutually accepted truth. In other words, we are not consigned to remaining in a state of permanent deadlock

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10. *Called to Unity in Mission: A Report of the Anglican Church of Canada – United Church of Canada Dialogue* (2016), 12. Reaffirmed by both churches with the *Statement of Mutual Affirmations and Commitments* (2019).

11. CTUM, 12.

12. Lambeth Conference of 1888, Resolution 11.

13. More on the recent restructuring of UCC polity follows below.

14. This approach appears most prominently in the document of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999) which the Anglican Communion has itself affirmed. It has also been employed more recently in various ecumenical contexts and statements.

simply because we are not exactly the same. In fact, the final report of the 2010-2016 phase of the ACC-UCC dialogue, *Called to Unity in Mission* (CTUM)<sup>15</sup>, identified exactly where the dialogue should continue to focus its efforts in this regard, and alluded to areas where further progress might be possible.

## Where are we going?

11. CTUM outlined two specific areas for further reflection by the Anglican and United churches respectively, suggesting that they should be central to the mandate of a future expression of the dialogue. A review of these is also in order:

12. To the United Church of Canada, the CTUM document asks: “Where, within the revised structures of the United Church of Canada... is the ministry of episcopate — ensuring unity, continuity and ordering of the church’s life and ministry — to be found.” It goes further to query: “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 episcopate is made manifest?”<sup>16</sup> In these two key questions we see reference to the process of jurisdictional and geographical restructuring which is a result of the implementation of decisions confirmed at the United Church’s General Council in 2018. Said differently, as this restructuring takes place, the United Church has been encouraged to spell out more specifically which offices within its conciliar and communal structures are intended to embody the ongoing task of episcopate, and indeed to reflect on when and where certain elements of this ministry are in fact carried on through the leadership of particular people within those structures. These requests are made in large part for the sake of clarity in ecumenical relationships generally, and with the hope of more readily identifying a basis for differentiated consensus on the ministry of episcopate between our two churches in especially.

13. To the Anglican Church of Canada, CTUM asks for the following: “We invite clarification by Anglicans of the conciliar accountability of those who exercise a personal episcopate. 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.”<sup>17</sup> Here we see that Anglicans are being asked to describe more fully how it is that their emphasis on the unique role of bishops as personal foci of episcopate is also augmented and tempered by accountability to conciliar and communal structures that would be recognizable to people in the United Church.

14. The CTUM report was received and affirmed by both the ACC and the UCC in 2016. Therefore, responding to these two requests for further study on episcopate given to us by our predecessor body in this dialogue has been the subject of a significant portion of our work from 2017 onwards. Part II of this present document is devoted directly to such an effort.

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15. *Called to Unity in Mission: A Report of the Anglican Church of Canada – United Church of Canada Dialogue* (2016).

16. CTUM, 14.

17. CTUM, 15.

PART I

LOCATING THE MINISTRY OF EPISCOPE  
IN THE ACC AND UCC

**The personal and communal exercise of episcopate in the  
Anglican Church of Canada**

15. A standard assumption is that Anglicans locate episcopate entirely in the persons of their bishops. To this is sometimes added a popular stereotype of the office of the Anglican bishop as being heavily hierarchical in its shape, and unilateral in its operations. Such perceptions are, of course, typically informed by negative experiences of the way that episcopal ministry may have, in certain times and places, been seen to be exercised. While it is always important to hear these critiques, and, of course, to acknowledge the need for ongoing reform in the structures of ecclesial governance — be they episcopal or otherwise — some clarification of inaccurate perceptions is also a necessary task in ecumenical dialogue. What follows is an attempt to do exactly that by describing the ways that ACC episcopate is both personal and communal. This description is not completely exhaustive of all that could be included, and it is also only a snapshot of a tradition which is alive and therefore always continuing to evolve.<sup>18</sup>

16. Although the Anglican ecclesiological tradition is one which emphasizes the ministry of episcopate as carried out in the person of the bishop, there are also many means within Anglican polity of ensuring that episcopate is accountable to the wider church and is shared by the whole of the church in communal and collaborative ways. Canadian Anglicans have heard the call of their United Church siblings to explicate this further.

17. In 1997, the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission issued a report on the structures of governance within the Anglican communion. The *Virginia Report*, as it has come to be known, described Anglican polity using the phrase “episcopally led and synodically governed.”<sup>19</sup> What this means concretely is interpreted and lived out in varying expressions throughout the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. In general terms, however, it refers to a kind of *via media* position in the area of ecclesial governance that falls somewhere between the hierarchical-episcopal models of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches on the one hand, and the more conciliar-communal and congregational methods of many of the historic Reformed and Presbyterian churches on the other. As has been expressed in CTUM,

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18. This report admittedly does not focus as fully as it might examples of Indigenous self-determination in ecclesial governance. This will be something to continue to pay attention to as it develops further.

19. The *Virginia Report* (The Anglican Consultative Council, 1997), 5.11

episcopally led and synodically governed is a description which the ACC recognizes in itself and sees reflected quite widely in its own structures.<sup>20</sup>

18. The most fundamental unit of ecclesial jurisdiction in the ACC is the local diocese, of which there are currently 30 in Canada. Although parishes, with their baptismal and ordered ministries of laity, deacons, and presbyters, also participate in the work of receiving and handing on the faith in their own congregations, and therefore have some share in the ministry of episcopate in a broad sense, they do so as part of a whole diocesan church. Each diocese is led by a diocesan bishop, sometimes called the 'Ordinary' or 'Local Bishop', who is the preeminent personal office bearer and exerciser of the ministry of episcopate. Depending on the geographical and numerical size of the diocese, it may have additional bishops known variously as 'Suffragan Bishops' or 'Area Bishops' who share fully in the episcopal ministry alongside the Ordinary.

19. The role of the local bishop contains many responsibilities: to serve as chief pastor, to give leadership among the college of clergy, to function as chief liturgist, to preside at the sacraments and other sacramental ministrations (with a special emphasis on Ordination and, in the Anglican tradition, Confirmation), and to serve as a sign, witness, and instrument of the unity of the Church locally, regionally, and globally. Episcopal ministry also includes significant oversight in the discernment and training of future clergy, and the collegial discipline of active clergy. In many of these areas bishops are assisted and advised by various other bodies made up of members of the church, but it is the bishop who carries the final say.

20. While Anglican bishops do have a high degree authority and influence within their diocese, the authority of the local bishop is also balanced substantially by various structures of dispersed and elected authority. Parishes and their clergy are certainly bound by canonical regulations and vows of obedience to the administrative and pastoral leadership of their bishop, but so too are bishops bound to the constitutions and canons of their dioceses and to the processes of governance and decision making through synodical consultation which are established in them.

21. Every diocese led by a bishop is also governed by the 'Diocesan Synod', which is the primary consultative structure of the local Church. The diocesan bishop serves as the chair of the synod, and each parish is represented by its appointed clergy and a certain number of apportioned lay delegates elected by the congregation at its 'Annual General Meeting'. The synod must be convened on a regular basis to govern a broad range of ecclesiastical affairs, and in the Canadian context this happens most commonly every 2 or 3 years. Substantial matters regarding mission, ministry, canon law, finances, and so on, are brought to the synod for discussion and decision through resolutions and voting. While resolutions of the diocesan synod must be given 'assent' by the bishop to come into effect, the discernment and decision making of bishops and synods is intended to be collaborative and not adversarial. Special 'Electoral Synods' are also convened when needed and are responsible for electing diocesan

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20. CTUM, 13.

bishops in the Anglican tradition. In these synodal structures we see a genuine commitment to principles of diverse representation and genuine collegiality in ecclesial governance.

22. In between synods, each diocese will establish an executive body, often called the 'Diocesan Council' or the 'Executive Council', which does the work of the synod in between its sessions. Also chaired by the bishop, such councils are made up of lay and ordained individuals who are elected to them during the previous diocesan synod, along with select appointments that are made by the bishop. Such executive bodies will typically have 'Standing Committees' (for example in the areas of administration, finance, etc.) which are accountable to it, and which carry out oversight regarding various aspects of church life. Other advisory committees (such as 'Postulancy Committees' or 'Finance Committees', etc.) are often created by the bishop to share in these aspects of diocesan administration and operation. These committees allow for an even wider participation in the church's leadership by people of a range of backgrounds, gifts, and experience.

23. Each of the dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada retain a fair bit of freedom to make decisions which allow them to adapt to distinct differences and needs of their local reality. These localized rules and regulations, called 'Diocesan Canons and Constitutions', are set in place to establish accepted ways of operating from place to place according to contextual circumstances. While on larger matters there is a close 'family resemblance' from diocese to diocese, local variations in smaller aspects of church life are common.<sup>21</sup>

24. Although there is this possibility for local adaptation, there are also various broader instruments of regional and national consultation and governance that are designed to preserve a level of consistency. Other 'Canons' also exist at the regional (Ecclesiastical Province) and national level (General Synod), which dioceses and their bishops accept as regulating the more common elements of wider church life. For this reason, dioceses relate to and consult with one another through structures such as the 'Ecclesiastical Provinces' and their respective 'Provincial Synods', and through the 'General Synod' as a national expression of the church. All local bishops also gather together several times a year for consultation and collaboration through the meetings of the 'House of Bishops'.<sup>22</sup>

25. Ecclesiastical provinces are groupings of several dioceses within larger regions of the country. The Anglican Church of Canada contains four such provinces: The Province of Canada, The Province of Ontario, The Province of Rupert's Land, and The Province of British

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21. One good recent example of this is the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, located in portions of northern Ontario and Manitoba. This is a diocesan ecclesial unit, with bishops in leadership, but one which also enables consultation and decision making shaped by local Indigenous cultural and societal history and customs. As further steps are taken in Indigenous ecclesial self-determination, additional examples of this in various places and at various levels are possible.

22. The House of Bishops typically meets twice annually as an occasion for prayer, consultation, and the promotion of relationship and unity between diocesan bishops in Canada. Although it does not have a legislative authority on its own, it exercises a certain authority of moral suasion and serves as a source of direction and implementation of the work of the General Synod.

Columbia and the Yukon. Although it is constituted differently, as of 2019 the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples also functions in a self-determining way which shares some analogous similarities with the functions of an ecclesiastical province within ACC polity. As mentioned above, each of these provinces have developed and adopted further canonical provisions which serve to organize and regulate their collective life.

26. Like dioceses, ecclesiastical provinces also convene for synods regularly — again, typically every 2-3 years. Each diocese sends its bishop(s) and a certain number of elected lay and clerical delegates to the gatherings. Provincial synods nominate lay and clergy delegates to fill various executive roles at the provincial level. Periodically, upon retirements and vacancies, they also elect one of the bishops from within the province to serve as the Archbishop for the province. The ACIP also elects a ‘National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop’.

27. The primary responsibilities of the ‘Metropolitan Archbishops’ are to act as the chair of the provincial synod, and to promote unity in faith and mission among the bishops and dioceses of the ecclesiastical province. While today provincial synods in the Anglican Church of Canada tend to have more modest jurisdictional authority, they remain an important forum for mutual education, discernment, resource sharing, and cooperation in ministry.

28. The ‘General Synod’ of the Anglican Church of Canada was formed in 1893 through the collective assent of what were the then extant ecclesiastical provinces and dioceses in the land. This makes the nature of its relationship to provinces and dioceses different than some other parts of the Anglican Communion. The General Synod has a similar composition to that of the synods of the ecclesiastical provinces, except that it convenes the church from across the nation of Canada as a whole. Dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces have likewise jointly assented to be subject to the canonical stipulations of the General Synod. The General Synod currently meets every 3 years, with each diocese sending a specified number of lay, clergy, and bishops as delegates. It is responsible for voting on legislative resolutions regarding administrative, liturgical, and doctrinal matters, the election of officers, and coordinating common mission and ministry initiatives nationwide.

29. The work of the General Synod is supported financially by the dioceses through voluntary contributions. As such, the General Synod can hire staff to coordinate the work associated with national programs and ministries. Managing the national staff is one of the duties of the ‘General Secretary’, who essentially serves as the ‘Chief Operations Officer’ of the church. Being accountable to the General Synod, the General Secretary oversees much of the day to day administration of the General Synod and its numerous departments, committees, and commissions. This role is one which may be held by a member of the laity or the clergy, but not by a member of the episcopate.

30. In between its triennial meetings, the ‘Council of General Synod’ (CoGS) serves as the executive body of the Anglican Church of Canada in its national expression. The Council of General Synod is also comprised of delegates elected by the General Synod, with each ecclesiastical province, as well as the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, being allocated a select number of lay and ordained members. Representatives from full communion partners,

such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), are present as observers with voice but not vote. The Council typically meets several times each calendar year to oversee the committees created by the General Synod to carry out its mandates.

31. Among the significant duties of the General Synod is the election of the ‘Primate’ of the Anglican Church of Canada. The Primate, who must be nominated from among those in active service as a bishop in the ACC, is elected by the lay and clerical delegates to the General Synod from each diocese. The slate of nominations for Primate is determined by the House of Bishops, but the bishops do not vote in the primatial election.

32. The Primate, who, upon election, if not already being so styled, assumes the title and office of Archbishop alongside of the Metropolitans as first among equals. They can be taken to function as the ‘Chief Executive Officer’ of the church nationally, and as the face and spiritual leader of the church in national expression. While the Primate has a preeminent role in leading, discerning, and speaking on behalf of the ACC as a whole, this always occurs in a consultative fashion and in accordance with the policies of the General Synod and the Council of General Synod. The Primate presides over the proceedings of the General Synod, serves as the chair of the meetings of Council of General Synod, and chairs the bi-annual meetings of the House of Bishops. They do not, however, have a local jurisdiction, which is always the purview of each diocese and its local bishop and synod.

33. The charring duties and other administrative functions of the Primate may be delegated from time to time to the office of the ‘Prolocutor’ of the General Synod. The Prolocutor, who may be laity or clergy, is an elected and non-episcopal office which serves in effect as the deputy of the Primate and the second Executive Officer for the church as a whole. The Prolocutor will sometimes preside over portions of the General Synod and the meetings of the Council of General Synod. In addition to the Prolocutor there is also always a ‘Deputy Prolocutor’ who can be further delegated to oversight over some of the national executive duties. If the Prolocutor is a member of the order of the laity, the Deputy Prolocutor will be a member of the ordained ministry, and vice versa. Here again we see an effort to ensure balance in terms of representation and voice from different orders of ministry.

34. The global dimension of episcopal ministry is represented most fully in the fact that each local bishop is invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury to gather once approximately every ten years for the ‘Lambeth Conference’ of the worldwide Anglican Communion — one of the four global ‘Instruments of Communion’ — and, in some cases, to serve on other bodies of the Communion through election or appointment.<sup>23</sup> The Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, in particular, participates in another of the Instruments of Communion know as the ‘Primates’ Meeting’, which meets annually.<sup>24</sup> Each of these structures that the

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23. The four “Instruments of Communion” include the Lambeth Conference, the Primates Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

24. The Anglican Communion understands itself to have four “Instruments of Communion” which serve its unity at the global level. These include: The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Lambeth Conference of Bishops, The Primates’ Meeting, and The Anglican Consultative Council.

Canadian Anglican bishops are able to share the voice of the Canadian Anglican church with the wider Anglican Communion, and to carry the witness of the Communion back to their local dioceses.

35. From this brief overview, we hope it is now clear that the perception of Anglican bishops as ‘ecclesiastical autocrats’ is not accurate within the structures that actually exist in the ACC. Such caricatures are based on models of episcopal leadership which, if they ever existed, are long outmoded. Conciliar accountability for those who exercise a personal ministry of episcopate is widespread in the ACC at the local, regional, national, and international levels. Bishops are tremendously important leaders, but the participation of all orders of Christian ministry in governance and decision making is embodied in the ACC in numerous ways. It can therefore be quite accurately said that the ACC is a church which is “episcopally led and synodically governed.”

## **The Communal and Personal Exercise of Episcopate in the United Church of Canada**

36. The United Church of Canada understands the ministry of episcopate (governance, oversight, authority, guardianship) as one of the historic three-fold ministries that evolved within the early church communities and became engrained in the developing structure of Church governance. The ecclesial authority entrusted to the episcopate varies among denominations, and there is no one model or definition that fits all. The World Council of Churches recent convergence document, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, makes a strong case for the exercise of episcopate 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 episcopate 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.<sup>25</sup>

37. The influence, authority, and importance of episcopate, as well as the place in which it resides, has varied in history, and presently varies in the many churches of Christ throughout the world.

The most significant divergence occurred in the sixteenth century between ecclesial traditions that emphasized the personal episcopate in the order of bishops, and those that favoured conciliar models of oversight which vested the functions of episcopate within elected bodies and revolving leadership models. The United Church is descended mainly from Christian

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25. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (WCC Publishing, 2013), 52.

communities which have had a historical preference for the latter model. While this same basic ecclesiological orientation exists today, nevertheless there are some aspects of UCC oversight that are expressed in personal ways or through particular persons. This following section elaborates on this point.

38. When it was formed in 1925, the United Church's episcopal responsibilities were located not in the person of a bishop, but in the courts of the church — traditionally the Session, Presbytery, Conference, and the General Council, chaired by the Moderator. The 'Session' was responsible for oversight of worship, the orderly administration of the sacraments, confirmation, and membership. The 'Presbytery' performed the ministry of episcopate on the church's behalf, being responsible for oversight of both the care and supervision of local congregations and the support and discipline of ordered ministry. The 'Conferences' provided oversight in ensuring that ordinands were in "essential agreement" with doctrine, and in carrying out ordinations through the laying on of hands. The 'General Council' had oversight for the continuity of doctrine.

39. The 'Moderator' is the elected, presiding officer of the meetings of the General Council, its executive, and its sub-executive. The Moderator may be a lay person or a member of the Order of Ministry and is expected to give spiritual leadership and public representation for the church. If ordained, the Moderator is designated "the Right Reverend." 'Former Moderators', if ordained, are designated "the Very Reverend." If commissioned as a Diaconal Minister, the Moderator is free to choose whether or not to use the designation "the Right Reverend" or "the Very Reverend." Lay Moderators are addressed as they personally wish to be addressed.

40. While the Session (or equivalent) and the General Council continue to carry on their ministry of episcopate in much the same way, at the 43rd General Council in 2018, the United Church took a significantly new approach to the ministry of episcopate by splitting the ministry of oversight between two newly created bodies. The first of these is the 'Regional Council' (16 in total), which replaced the courts of Presbytery and Conference. The second is the 'Office of Vocation', a new entity within the national denominational structure.

41. The 16 regional councils carry on the ministry of episcopate through covenant relationships with all the 'Communities of Faith'<sup>26</sup> and 'Ordered Ministers' within their bounds. The primary role of the Regional Council is the oversight of Communities of Faith in the Region, including the health, vitality, and wellness of ordered ministers. They are also responsible for the ordination of Ministers, the commissioning of 'Diaconal Ministers', and the recognition of 'Designated Lay Ministers' deemed ready by the Office of Vocation. These regional councils are composed of laity and ordered ministers who elect a 'Regional Council President' for a limited term, who then presides at Regional Council meetings and at Services of Covenanting between Communities of Faith and those called to serve with them. They may also preside at worship services held during the Regional Council. The President would be installed and

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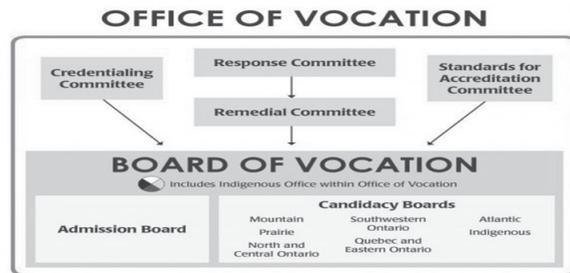
26. Local congregations.

commissioned for this ministry by members of the Regional Council, including the passing of appropriate symbols of office from the Past President.<sup>27</sup> ‘Past Presidents’ can be called upon to represent the current President’s office in their absence.

42. The Office of Vocation is a new entity in the UCC and has responsibility for the oversight of all ministry personnel. Specifically, the Office of Vocation supports the processes for the discernment and training of ministry personnel, the determination of their fitness/readiness for accreditation, the fulfillment of continuing education standards, and the formal processes for oversight and discipline of ministry personnel.

43. This ministry of oversight is fulfilled in a conciliar fashion by the ‘Board of Vocation’, which is a body of elected members (lay and clergy) having oversight of the Office of Vocation itself. The committees which report to this board do the work of credentialing, admitting clergy from other denominations, determining remedial plans for clergy, and putting clergy on the discontinued service list. In the oversight and discipline of ministry personnel, the Board of Vocation has specific responsibility for establishing a ‘Formal Hearing Committee’ or an ‘Appeal Committee’.

44. The seven ‘Candidacy Boards’, which act as commissions of the Board of Vocation, determine the readiness of those who feel called to be ministers. This includes determining whether they are in “essential agreement” with the doctrines contained in the *Basis of Union*.<sup>28</sup> This fulfills the episcopal function of ensuring the historic succession of the Christian faith.



45. As we can see, although the United Church continues to function in a conciliar manner, some of the episcopal functions carried out by the Office of Vocation are represented in a person, namely the Ministers for the Office of Vocation.<sup>29</sup> These seven positions are the face of the Office of Vocation providing oversight in the regions. Though they have limited and shared authority, they are nonetheless symbols of the work of the episcopate in the Regions.

27. This can include a stoll, a crook staff, etc.

28. The United Church recognizes four statements of doctrine subordinate to the primacy of Scripture: A Song of Faith (2006), A New Creed (1968), A Statement of Faith (1940), and Twenty Articles of Doctrine found in the Basis of Union (1925). Within the Basis of Union reference is made to “primacy of Scripture”, the “foundation laid by the Apostles”, and the “great creeds of the ancient church.”

29. Although the language of “Minister” is used, these Ministers may or may not be persons who are serving in ordered ministry.

## PART II

# ATTENDING TO INSIGHTS FROM THE WIDER OIKUMENE

46. Churches of Reformed/Presbyterian and/or Methodist traditions have been in dialogue with Anglican churches for several decades on subjects of ecclesiology, governance, and polity. In recent years there has been some especially important progress made in this regard. Our goal in this third part of the report is to review several notable examples.

47. Though not entirely unique, the dynamics of the dialogue and relationship that exists between the ACC and the UCC are distinctive in the context of global ecumenical relations. This is both because of the particular history of Anglicanism in this part of the world as compared to other regions, and especially because of the way that the UCC has been shaped by varying aspects of the polity of not just one ecclesiological tradition but those of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Evangelical United Brethren families of churches which were part of the union.

48. It is for this reason that we have sought to draw from a few different ecumenical circles. Though far from being a representative survey of all of the potentially relevant dialogues that could have been consulted in this regard, we have chosen to highlight from a range of conversations those which seem to offer the most potential for application in the Canadian Anglican-United context.

### **Into All the World**

49. We begin by looking at Anglican-Methodist dialogues, and in particular some of the foundational principles which were collated by the 2014 report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity and Mission (AMICUM), entitled, *Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches*.<sup>30</sup> *Into All the World* represents a highlight in Anglican-Methodist relations on a number of fronts. It is, in effect, a harvesting of the work of national bilateral dialogues, a collation of their major breakthroughs, and a charting of new courses for the work into the future. To offer a complete summary of this important text is beyond our scope in this report. However, there are four essential findings/agreements which call for attention here.

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30. Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity and Mission, *Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches* (The Anglican Consultative Council, 2014).

50. The first is that, because of considerable shared history, dialogues between Anglicans and Methodists around the world have revealed enough consensus between Anglicans and Methodists to affirm together that personal, collegial, and communal forms of a ministry of oversight are practiced in both churches. Of course, this is built in part on the foundation of documents such as BEM, but it is an important piece of bedrock to sound out again clearly for these two ecclesial traditions specifically.<sup>31</sup>

51. A second important recognition is also made of the fact that any agreement which would see full communion established between Methodist and Anglican churches must honour the ecclesial integrity of ministerial orders in both churches. There can be no flattening of one tradition to impose the other, which is a fear in both churches. True ecumenism does not allow for winners and losers, as if it were a debate or competition in which only one 'side' can prevail. All have gifts to share, all need to be healed in some way by the other, and a restoration of communion is a step towards that.<sup>32</sup>

52. Thirdly, in a key section, AMICUM states clearly that Methodist and Anglican churches entering a relationship of communion will be committed to a future that includes ordination being carried out in historical continuity by ministers recognized as bearing the ministry of episcopate. Although this is clearly a nod to the Anglican insistence on historic episcopacy as a condition for full communion, it is to be taken in light of the spirit of the point just mentioned above.<sup>33</sup>

53. Finally, there is appreciation of the fact that growing into communion by Anglicans and Methodists in concrete places will require flexibility and periods of adjustment for both churches, which is a recognition of the need to accept what Anglicans have sometimes called certain "bearable anomalies" for the sake of unity.<sup>34</sup> A church should certainly celebrate its own commitments and self-understandings as a gift to be shared the other, and be free to preserve these as the norm within its own polity. However, sometimes it must also show itself willing to apply the spirit of the law rather than the letter towards an ecumenical partner.<sup>35</sup> Legitimate fidelity to a church's own self-understanding and legacy must not become a straight jacket which endlessly prohibits creative responses to new opportunities with ecumenical partners.<sup>36</sup>

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31. *Into All the World*, 122, 129k.

32. *Into All the World*, 125-127.

33. *Into All the World*, 125s.

34. On the origins and meaning of this phrase see Lambeth Conference 1998, Resolution IV.1 and IV.3.

35. The Orthodox Christian tradition speaks of this as the "principle of economy", where one seeks to allow exceptions to the rules for the sake of a restored relationship without thereby denying the importance of the rules.

36. *Into All the World*, 125t,u,v.

## Church of Ireland Bill 1

54. Also in 2014, the (Anglican) Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland took a ground-breaking step which saw them embody the possibilities envisioned by AMICUM earlier that same year. Building on an earlier ‘Covenant’ relationship designed to enable wide ranging sharing in mission and ministry as churches,<sup>37</sup> the *Bill to Provide for Interchangeability of Ministry Between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland* saw the Irish Anglicans formally recognize the Methodist President as an “Episcopal Minister” who carried out a form of personal episcopate similar to that which Anglicans see in the office of their own bishops.<sup>38</sup> While the title of President was retained for this person, as well as the traditional function of that office within the Methodist tradition (including limited terms of service), the Methodist Church in Ireland also embraced an understanding of the ministry of the President as indeed being personally episcopal. The Methodists Church also agreed to live into that by inviting Church of Ireland bishops to participate in the installation and consecration of its future Presidents, and to send its own future Presidents and former Presidents to participate in the ordination of Church of Ireland bishops.

55. This represents, in a powerful way, the convergence arrived at in these two churches in understanding the ministry of episcopate, while also preserving distinctive emphases. It respects the ecclesial integrity of the Methodist tradition, while also seeing the sign of the historic episcopate more fully expressed as it becomes something both churches grow to share together more fully. In due course, the relationship has come to include the full recognition and transferability of episcopally ordained presbyteral ministers between the two churches. Although it does not quite represent a full communion agreement, this is the first example of this kind of substantial action by a church with episcopal polity and a church without. The Irish model seems to us to stand as a potential building block which other contexts might constructively draw upon, including our own.

## Mission and Ministry in Covenant

56. Though having their own local particularities, the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Great Britain have been walking on a similar path as the Irish example above. A 2003 Covenant called on the two churches to move ever further towards a sharing as fully as possible in the call to witness and service in the world, and to pursue the necessary steps to inaugurate ever fuller visible unity to the point of full communion.<sup>39</sup> The text makes explicit reference to a desire to share together in a ministry of a reconciled historic episcopate, and to the complete interchangeability of ministers between both churches.

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37. *Covenant Between the Methodist Church in Ireland and The Church of Ireland* (26 September 2002).

38. General Synod of the Church of Ireland (2014), *Bill 1: To Provide for Interchangeability of Ministry Between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland*.

39. *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (2003).

57. In 2017, the Covenant's Joint Implementation Commission released a concrete plan for how to pursue these goals. It was given the title *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, and was favorably received by the General Synod of the Church of England and the Methodist Conference in 2018.<sup>40</sup> It is this proposal which continues to guide the transition towards sharing episcopate and a mutual recognition of ministries.

58. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* also does an especially good job of recognizing and seeking to preserve the distinctive traditions of polity within each church, while at the same time finding creative ways to render these diversities no longer communion dividing. It acknowledges that episcopate, for British Methodism, is carried out "corporately" and "connexionally," making it very clear that this conviction means that the laity and ministers do indeed participate substantially in guarding and transmitting the apostolic continuity of the Church. The proposal, therefore, goes to significant lengths to describe a means by which the Methodist Church can resume the personal sign of the historic episcopate through its restored relationship with the Church of England, but without having to compromise anything from the deeply held ecclesiological values of its past history.

59. To this end, the proposal calls for a certain stretching by both churches. For the Methodists, it asks them to elect its future Presidents from among the current Methodist presbyters to a ministry of "President-bishop." The President-bishop would then be installed and ordained to this office in a liturgy which would include the laying on of hands by Methodist leadership, and with the participation of bishops of the Church of England and other bishops in full communion with it.

60. Following such a consecration, this Methodist President-bishop would then participate in the ordination of all future services of ordination in the Methodist church. This would thereby enable the Church of England to recognize Methodist ministers as episcopally ordered and thus able to provide sacramental ministry in a Church of England context in the same way as an ordained Anglican presbyter does.

61. Each of these steps are certainly understood as a challenge which requires significant charity of spirit on the part of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. However, it is made abundantly clear in the text that none of the steps would be undertaken as though passing a judgment upon or a rejection of anything about the Methodist polity of the past, but rather as an embrace of something additional undertaken for the sake of the greater visible unity of the Body of Christ into the future.<sup>41</sup>

62. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* does not place all the hard work on the Methodists alone. The Church of England is also presented with a challenge to embrace for the sake

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40. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant: Report of the Faith and Order Bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church* (2017).

41. Cf. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, 37-44.

of unity. This calls the C of E to immediately recognize as able to carry out ministry in the Church of England all Methodist presbyters who were ordained to their ministries prior to the reception of historic episcopacy. This is currently not possible according to Anglican doctrines and canons, which require episcopal ordination for anyone who seeks to serve as a minister in the Church of England. Nevertheless, the Anglicans are asked to seriously consider whether a departure from this typical norm might be in order as a sign of reconciliation reciprocal to the humility being shown by the Methodist Church.<sup>42</sup> This aspect of *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* has proven to be one of the most controversial, and is still being worked out. Nevertheless, the proposal has been enthusiastically affirmed, and further steps are expected to bring the plan to an eventual consummation.

63. Should the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Great Britain proceed into this kind of relationship together in the near future, it too will offer ample inspiration for Anglicans and their Methodist-influenced partners in other regions, and indeed for all ecumenical partners.

## A Gift to the World

64. The American Anglican-Methodist relationship has its own differences and complexities. Not only does The Episcopal Church have structures of oversight which are distinctive within the Anglican Communion, the United Methodist Church is an expression of the Methodist tradition which has continued the office of bishop. While this may be thought to make ecumenical engagement easier than in place where they have not, it too has its own kind of challenges.

65. In 2017 the United Methodist-Episcopal Dialogue Committee first issued the report *A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers in the Healing of Brokenness*, with small revisions in 2018.<sup>43</sup> The text reviews the decades of work that have enabled significant consensus in faith and the sharing of ecclesial life between these two American churches. It also acknowledges that while both partners in the dialogue recognize one another as apostolic churches, and affirm together the ministry of bishops as leaders in mission, symbols of unity, and guardians of faith, Episcopalians and Methodists still do not share together in the “historic episcopate” which Anglican self-understanding requires for full communion or the interchangeability of ministers. Some act of adjustment to recover this sharing is seen to be required.<sup>44</sup>

66. *A Gift to the World* states that the two churches affirm together that the ministries of bishops in both the United Methodist and The Episcopal churches are examples of local adaptation to the needs of the time and place that was post-revolutionary America. It is therefore clear

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42. Cf. *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, 54-73.

43. The United Methodist-Episcopal Dialogue Committee, *A Gift to the Word: Co-Laborers in the Healing of Brokenness* (October 2018).

44. *A Gift to the World*, 8.

not to judge one or the other expression of the ministry of episcopate as being more complete or authentic. It does call, however, upon the episcopacy of each church to receive a gift of healing and reconciliation from the other by drawing together more fully.

67. It is also worth noting, specifically, that the initiation of this common healing process is envisioned by the dialogue as beginning with an important liturgical act. It states that a service of prayer and confession, calling for forgiveness and healing of past sins against unity would be planned, which would include an act of the mutual laying on of hands by bishops of both churches for the sake of mutual healing and reception of grace. This is particularly notable for the way that it embodies the conviction that a resumption of full communion cannot ever be justly understood as a one-way action, where one Church receives something it has been lacking and the other goes unchanged. Both churches will acknowledge that they are being blessed by the other and that both are becoming more authentic expressions of Church by virtue of the restoration of their unity.<sup>45</sup>

68. In addition to this, the document recommends that the United Methodist Church commit to all future consecrations of its bishops also include participation and laying on of hands by a minimum of three bishops from either the Episcopal Church itself (or from its other full communion partner churches). The Episcopal Church promises the same regarding the participation of Methodist bishops in its own future episcopal ordinations.<sup>46</sup>

69. Sadly, the hoped-for implementation of this proposal has been put on hold for a time as the United Methodist Church struggles with internal discernment and division on other matters. Nevertheless, this American example is another instance where some significant groundwork has been laid which could be of benefit to other churches.

## The US Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement

70. Each of the previous examples we have considered have been focused on Anglican-Methodist relationships. Of course, certain kinds of ecumenical progress can become more complicated when we move to consider work on the mutual recognition of the ministry of episcopate between Anglicans and churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian family. Although the question has certainly been taken up by national and international dialogues, the same kinds of concrete steps have not yet been found possible to the same degree. Nevertheless, there is progress that warrants attention.

71. As one case study, we can look at the 2008 *Agreement* between the US based Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church USA.<sup>47</sup> Although it does not move past the challenge of diverse forms and practices related to episcopate, the *Agreement* does helpfully break some new

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45. *A Gift to the World*, 9.

46. *A Gift to the World*, 9.

47. *Agreement Between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church USA* (2008).

ground which seems to offer some possibilities to other contexts. As with the various Anglican-Methodist developments in dialogue, the Episcopalian and Presbyterian interlocutors in the USA are able to affirm together that they do recognize the ministry of episcopate being carried out in one another's churches, and that this see this as taking both episcopal and non-episcopal forms in both churches.<sup>48</sup> This is an important acknowledgment, and similar to aforementioned ones already made and affirmed by the ACC and UCC.

72. What is particularly interesting in the US dialogue is the step which this recognition is seen to enable. Because of its complexity, it is worth simply quoting in full: "We agree that authorized ministers of our churches may, subject to the regulations of the churches and within the limits of their competence, carry out the tasks of their own office in congregations of the other churches when requested and approved by the diocesan bishop and local presbytery."<sup>49</sup> An important footnote is then added to this statement for further clarity: "Because we do not yet have full reconciliation and interchangeability of ordained ministries, all authorization for these special opportunities must conform to the Book of Worship and Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and to the Book of Common Prayer and the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church."<sup>50</sup>

73. From these statements it is clear that a complete mutual recognition of ministries and interchangeability of ministers is not presently possible for these two churches. However, the *Agreement* is notable as an example of trying to regularize at least a partial step down that road while seeking to maximize the possibilities for action in that direction within the present constraints. This is an instance of what has sometimes been called the 'unity by stages' model of ecumenical progress, and we believe it has merits worthy of consideration among us.

## **Growth in Communion, Partnership in Mission; The Columba Declaration**

74. Another Presbyterian-Anglican dialogue which deserving of our attention is the agreement arrived at in 2016 between the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland and the Church of England. The text *Growth in Communion, Partnership in Mission* is a report produced following several years of dialogue on a variety of matters.<sup>51</sup> A concluding section, which has come to be known as The Columba Declaration, collates the major highlights of this work into a succinct form.<sup>52</sup>

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48. *Agreement*, 4.

49. *Agreement*, 5.

50. *Agreement*, n1.

51. *Growth in Agreement, Partnership in Mission: Report from the Church of England – Church of Scotland Joint Study Group* (2016).

52. Although some mistakes related to the public announcement of the agreement, and prior lack of consultation by the C of E with the Episcopal Church of Scotland did result in some unnecessary misunderstandings and hurt, apologies and amends were subsequently made. Scottish Episcopalians have also since been included on the commission responsible for the implementation of the agreement.

Where this report identifies some positive steps forward is with respect to the possibilities which exist for exceptional and partial transitivity of ministers in the context of “local ecumenical projects/co-operative schemes” (LEP/LECS), or Ecumenical Shared Ministries (ESMs) as they are more commonly referred to in Canada.

75. Within the Church of Scotland, the report notes, provisions exist for an ordained member of the clergy of the Church of England to serve in ministry in the Church of Scotland while remaining a minister of their own tradition. This can occur on the basis of what is called a “Mutual Eligibility Agreement” — i.e. a recognition by the Church of Scotland that an ordination performed in another church satisfies the essential requirements to be seen as equivalent.<sup>53</sup> While such arrangements have been possible on exceptional and term-limited occasions in the past, this approach has been regularized for the Church of Scotland and the Church of England as of 2018. This has only been found possible recently because of progress that has been made in wider ecumenical reflection on ministry, ordination, and orders of ministry.

76. Until quite recently, similar possibilities have not existed within the canonical constraints of the Church of England. However, that has gradually begun to change thanks to revisions to a section of the Church of England’s Canon Law known as the Ecumenical Relations Measure (ERM). First put in place in an early form in 1988, the ERM was originally designed to lay the groundwork for sharing of ministry, buildings, clergy, and so on, between the Church of England and various other UK churches (United Reformed, Methodist, etc.). At the time of the writing of *Growth in Communion, Partnership in Mission*, the report indicated its appreciation for the fact that “a Minister of the Church of Scotland would, on the basis of Canon B43, be able either occasionally or regularly: to preach; to lead Services of the Word; to share in presiding at joint services (including joint eucharistic services); to take funerals (with the family’s permission); and to assist with baptisms and weddings (but not officiate).”<sup>54</sup> The canons related to these provisions have continued to be revised in subsequent years to more accurately reflect the present nature and extent of ecumenical sharing in ministers and ministries.

77. Though not referenced in the report, because they post-date it, the most recent round of revisions, from 2018, have resulted in the current form of Church of England canon B43. Of note, specific to our ecumenical purposes, are B43.10(6), and B43.11(2)a-b, which, pending the appropriate permissions from the local bishop with oversight in each case, allow for an ordained minister of another church to be appointed to serve in ministry in a Church of England parish when such needs may arise and the ecumenical relationships there allow. This includes presiding at Holy Communion in that parish, which the canon further states may be celebrated according to the rites of the church which ordained them, or according to a rite authorized by the Church of England (The Book of Common Prayer, Common Worship, etc.). The only conditions on this are that the bishop with jurisdiction over this parish in question

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53. Church of Scotland, PARISH MINISTRY ACT (ACT II 2018), Edinburgh, 19 May 2018, Session 3.

54. *Growth in Agreement, Partnership in Mission*, 25.

must publish notice of the church to which the presiding minister belongs, and the rite which they will be using, so as to ensure the clarity of any Anglicans who are invited to receive this ministration. Going the other direction, Canon B 43.10(4) allows for a Church of England priest to preside at Holy Communion in another church, according to the rites of that church, without impinging upon their standing as an ordained minister in the Church of England.<sup>55</sup>

78. While *Growth in Communion, Partnership in Mission* recognizes that such adjustments, specific as they are only to the context of Ecumenical Shared Ministries, do not yet amount to the full recognition and interchangeability of ministries which remains the goal of ecumenical dialogue, nevertheless they do mean “that Church of England and Church of Scotland congregations would be free to explore the possibilities of developing an [LEP/LECS] arrangement, which would open the way for a more integral sharing of ministries.”<sup>56</sup> This is seen as a very positive step along the way to deeper communion, and one undertaken for the sake of providing ministry in places that may otherwise not have regular recourse to a Christian presence in their midst. We find inspiration in it for us as well.

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55. See the *Canons of the Church of England*, 7th edition.

56. *Growth in Agreement, Partnership in Mission*, 27.

PART III

SUGGESTING WAYS FORWARD  
IN THE ACC-UCC CONTEXT

79. Our purpose to this point in this text has been clear: “Continue the dialogue on episcopate.” In pursuit of this, we began by rehearsing where broad ecumenical consensus has helped us advance in our thinking about ministry, apostolicity, and episcopacy since the early 1980s. We believe it is critical not to lose sight of the massive strides which have already been made in this area, which have enabled our two churches to acknowledge one another’s succession in the apostolic tradition, the roles of various ordered ministers within that process, and even the existence of ministries of episcopate serving that end in various forms.

80. Our next task was to follow the advice of our predecessors in ACC-UCC dialogue, which called upon us to outline more fully than we had before how it is that Anglican episcopate is both personal and conciliar, and United episcopate is both conciliar and personal. In both churches the dynamic between these two elements is always undergoing renewal, and our time is no different. We believe that the recent restructuring decisions taken by the UCC, and the ongoing process to implement them, provides us with a new opportunity to think about that respective work of renewal with ecumenical implications in mind. The newly initiated process of ‘Governance Review’ in the ACC may do so as well.

81. The third movement in this study was to look to the global oikumene, recognizing that the Anglican-United dialogue takes place as part of a much larger ongoing conversation between Anglicans and their United, Uniting, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Methodist partners around the world. Thanks be to God recent years have seen some exciting breakthroughs in this regard, or promises thereof in the near future. Our Canadian dialogue does not need to carry out its efforts in isolation, but rather can draw upon the good work of our fellow ecumenical labourers in other contexts to suggest possible models that could be adapted for our setting. We see great potential in the examples we surveyed in this study and commend them enthusiastically for our churches’ reflections.

82. We also feel ourselves in a position, on the basis of these prior sections, to be able to suggest some potential new steps to our leadership — steps which we believe could, in due course, and with the requisite processes followed in each church, be taken as part of our ongoing growth towards unity as Christ wills and in the way Christ wills. Two of these are short to medium-term steps and can be understood as part of initiating an enhanced ‘Functional Ministry Sharing Partnership’. The others are a series of longer-term steps, which can fall under the heading of what we see being required for the ACC and UCC to move towards a declaration of relations of ‘Full Communion.’ We turn to unpack those suggestions now as we come towards the conclusion of our study.

## Functional Ministry Sharing Partnership

83. On the Anglican side, as a way of committing to a more intentional Functional Ministry Sharing Partnership, we believe it may be feasible for the ACC to investigate the canonical provisions which currently exist in the Church of England (B43) to enable ordained ministers from churches in the Presbyterian/Reformed traditions to minister according to their own office in an Anglican/Episcopal congregation, and to initiate a discussion of how these might be fruitfully fitted to the Canadian Anglican context. Taking this decision would enable greater flexibility for diocesan bishops in promoting and supporting the growing number of places where Anglican and United congregations are seeking to minister in partnership across Canada. We see this direction as especially important for places where having to actively work at maintaining a Christian ministry presence of any kind, regardless of denomination, is now an increasingly common reality.

84. Such a potential ACC provision would likely have to be developed initially with only UCC Ordained Ministers in mind. We do wish to note that United Church Diaconal Ministers are also considered “ordered ministers” within UCC polity. Because of this, the logic that has been outlined in this document does also suggest to us that, if that ordering takes place under the oversight of the office/officers who exercise a ministry of episcopate in the UCC, there may also be a potential basis for a transferability of one another’s diaconal ministries at some point in the future as well. However, at present we believe the question of a full mutual recognition of deacons/Diaconal Ministers between our churches must remain an area for further dialogue between us.<sup>57</sup> Reserving this question for a later time in our deepening relationship would in some ways be similar to the decision made by the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada to withhold consideration of a common understanding and ministerial transitivity of deacons until a future time, rather than insisting upon it at the beginning of their full communion relationship.<sup>58</sup> Such an approach should not be taken as casting any negative judgement regarding the full and equal value of the vocation of diaconal ministry in either church, or a diminishment of the ministries of those persons who lead and serve our churches in this venerable order. It is simply an acknowledgement of additional complexities and diversities that exist in our understandings and practices of diakonia.

85. As is articulated in the Church of England and The Episcopal Church materials which delineate the specifics of such clergy sharing arrangements, we anticipate that a UCC Ordained Minister authorized to serve in the ACC would remain UCC clergy in their denominational

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57. Differing understandings of the ministry of deacons, especially around the sacraments, makes the reasoning for this clear. The primary focus of the Ordering of UCC Diaconal Ministers is to education, service, social justice, and pastoral care, as compared to the emphasis on word and sacrament ministry of their Ordained Minister colleagues. However, if the Diaconal Minister is serving in a ministerial call or appointment, they are automatically authorized and licenced by the Regional Council to fulfill sacramental roles in that context. Deacons serving in an Anglican setting more commonly serve in assisting roles in connection with sacramental celebration, and are not authorized to preside at services of Holy Communion.

58. See *The Waterloo Declaration*, section D paragraph 4.

affiliation, and would offer their pastoral and sacramental ministry in an Anglican diocese according to the capacities of their ordination in the United Church of Canada. While a prospective canon might, as the Church of England canon does, give them permission to use authorized Anglican liturgical materials for services of worship, they would not be taken as doing so according to the use of the Anglican Church of Canada. As in the Church of England, the local bishop with jurisdiction over the congregation in question would be required to make known publicly and to the congregation that the minister offering services in the particular parish in question was a minister of the United Church of Canada specially authorized by the bishop to exercise ministry in that place, rather than a priest ordained in the Anglican Church of Canada.

86. In addition to drawing from the England model above, such a new canon might also consider drawing upon the existing Canon IV of the ACC General Synod to stipulate that any UCC ordered ministers who were authorized to exercise word and sacrament ministry in the ACC: be “a) of the required age, of virtuous conversation, without crime, and learned in Holy Scripture,” “b) present to the diocesan bishop Letters Bene Decessit, or equivalent credentials, from the [...] equivalent jurisdiction with which he or she was last connected,” (in the case of the UCC, the Regional Council President and appropriate Office of Vocation Minister), and “c) promise in writing to submit in all things to the discipline of The Anglican Church of Canada” and of the local Diocese in which they serve.

87. Within the polity of the ACC, implementation of any such provisions would be entirely at the discretion of each local bishop in their own diocese. Permission granted in one instance and place would not be transferable to another parish or diocese unless due process was followed for its episcopal approval there as well.

88. We see some potential modifications in UCC policy related to clergy sharing as well. Since at least 2006, both the ACC and UCC have been participants in the work of an Ecumenical Shared Ministries Task Group, currently co-sponsored by the Anglican, Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian, and United churches. This Task Group has been working on, among other things, ways that these churches might at least partially recognize each other’s clergy in situations where some sharing of things like buildings and worship and other congregational life has developed organically. This has resulted in some guidelines for congregations that may wish to form an Ecumenical Shared Ministry. An ESM is a special kind of ecumenical endeavor defined as “people worshipping and serving God in a unified way while still maintaining their denominational identity and connections.” It often involves special arrangements between judicatory bodies in each church to ensure that the rules and regulations of each church are respected and followed. Stories of some of these arrangements are described in another document produced by this dialogue: “Sharing Ministry Ecumenically: Creating and Sustaining Ecumenical Shared Ministries — Some Insights and Guidelines.”

89. While the UCC’s general provisions for ESMs are relevant here, and indicate that the recognition and calling into ministry of clergy from Anglican and other churches is already a practice supported in United church policy, we believe further steps could be taken in the United Church to regularize and broaden this practice beyond the context of Ecumenical

Shared Ministries alone. We therefore suggest that the UCC Office of Vocation works to develop a policy which would allow for ordained Anglican ministers (and those from churches with whom the ACC is in full communion) to serve as the pastoral ministers of UCC Communities of Faith long-term, without having to cease being Anglican clergy. The approach of the “Mutual Eligibility Agreement” of the Church of Scotland, noted above, may be a helpful source to reflect on further in this regard. Upon completion of such a draft policy, we recommend it being brought for approval by the General Council.

## Full Communion

90. The ultimate goal of our ecumenical engagement, in all its forms, has always been the full visible unity of our two churches. The precise form which we have assumed this will take has shifted on a few occasions in our shared history and work towards it, often at the cause of pain. Today we are agreed that the concept of “full communion” does not mean the kind of structural merger or so-called “organic union” that was once contemplated for us. Neither, significantly, does full communion mean a uniformity of all areas of expression, order, practice, spirituality, etc. However, full communion is a substantial step into broad mutual recognition of members, ministers, and sacramental life, a wide-ranging sharing of common service and witness, and a deeply interconnected partnership as sibling churches. To take such a step should not require that a church be asked to surrender all those things which have been and are fundamental to its self-understanding and theological integrity. However, we should also not be surprised if the call to unity asks all involved to make various kinds of gracious and loving sacrifices.

91. A declaration of full communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada would indeed call for many sacrificial adjustments on both sides, and we recognize that they would not be easy ones to make. Nevertheless, a ‘cross-shaped ecumenism’ — which is the kind which is surely called for from a follower of Jesus Christ — means being willing to give some of ourselves away for the sake of reconciled relationship with the other. Our common Saviour bore the cross in the name of making peace with us. If that is true, then we should expect to walk a path of similar humility and selfless love for the sake of the communion of Christ’s Body, the Church. In the interest of openness and honesty as siblings in Christ, we wish to suggest what we believe embracing a call towards full communion might look like in both of our churches.

92. As mentioned previously, Anglicans are accustomed to using the 1888 Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as a key point of reference for what is seen to be required for full communion. It identifies the following four features which must be recognized in any communion partner 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. (d) 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.”<sup>59</sup>

93. In the earlier stages of our ecumenical relationship, the ACC and UCC have made joint affirmations about our common adherence to the Scriptures, to our sharing of the faith born witness to in the historic creedal statements of the apostolic Church, and of the centrality of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion in our life and worship.<sup>60</sup> It is evident, therefore, that substantial progress has been made through our dialogue on the first three of four markers. From the perspective of Anglicans, fulfilling the remaining condition for a deeper communion relationship between us would mean not only being able to recognize that there is a ministry of episcopate in service within the United Church (which we have already done), but also that the UCC is willing to manifest a commitment to establish more explicitly personal, historic, and successive expressions of that office, and to sharing it as a sign together with other sibling churches for the sake of greater visible unity.

94. Fortunately, our dialogue has identified some of the persons who seem to operate as what might be described as ‘Ministers of Episcopate’ in the United Church, especially in both the Office of Vocation Ministers and the Regional Council Presidents. Although it is not the adoption, or not, of the title of ‘bishop’ for these officers in the UCC that is of concern in this regard, a journey towards full communion would certainly entail Anglicans inviting their UCC siblings to a more intentional and explicit definition of the episcopal nature of the roles of the Office of Vocation Ministers and the Regional Council Presidents.

95. In addition, the Anglican tradition would be further prone to ask the UCC whether, if the Office of Vocation Ministers and Regional Council Presidents are indeed the office bearers who can be seen to personally embody aspects of the ministry of episcopate, they may also be fittingly called upon to have the leading roles in the carrying out of particular leadership functions within the wider system of conciliar order and governance in the UCC. For Anglicans these might be thought to include especially the following: 1) Participation in the ordinations and ordering of Ordained Ministers and Diaconal Ministers through the laying on of hands as a sign and expression of the confirmation of the whole church regarding their fitness and preparation for that ministry, and 2) In the pastoral and doctrinal oversight of other ministers, and of the Communities of faith.

96. Anglicans would also have questions about how those who may be called by the church to personally exercise this ministry of episcopate are seen to receive it from those who carried it before, and how they hand it on to those who succeed them in their roles. Further specification in these areas as well would help Anglicans more readily recognize in the UCC what they refer to when they speak of the historic elements of the historic episcopate.

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59. Lambeth Conference of 1888, Resolution 11.

60. See the ACC-UCC *Statement of Mutual Affirmations and Commitments* (2019), which collates the points of common consensus and agreement arrived at through the course of some 40 years of dialogue. While we are not claiming a uniformity in understanding and practice, we do see, and have said in formal ways, that there is a ‘differentiated consensus’ sufficient to allow this kind of diversity to no longer divide us from communion.

97. On this point our dialogue members have noted that, in the United Church, both Office of Vocation Ministers and Regional Council Presidents are ministry roles which can be held by Ordained, Diaconal, and lay ministers alike. We see this as an expression of a strong conviction within the UCC about the equal stature of each of these forms of life and service in the Church. For Anglicans, those who carry out the personal office of the ministry of episcopate are elected by the laity and clergy from among the order of ordained presbyters and are then further ordained to their episcopal ministry. Thus Anglicans are inclined to wonder if, for the sake of full communion, the UCC would consider whether those persons in their polity who are similarly called upon to personally carry out certain key elements of the ministry of episcopate might fittingly be ordained/commissioned/consecrated to those offices? Such a step would not be suggested with the intent of wanting to see such persons placed in rank over and above other ordained ministers, diaconal ministers, or lay people, who all have their own essential roles to play in the oversight of the church. Rather, it would simply be envisaged as a way of identifying one of the many distinct parts of ministry in the One Body of Christ, and of calling for the grace of the Holy Spirit which such specific ministry demands.

98. Should such focused developments in the area of personal and historic episcopate ever be contemplated in the United Church, we also wish to underscore, along similar lines as the Church of Ireland Methodist and Church of England Methodist proposals referenced above, that every effort would also need to be made to ensure that the wider system of conciliar structures of episcopate which presently exist in the UCC, and the distinctives of the Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Evangelical United Brethren traditions which have shaped it to this point, not be reduced or diminished. We affirm that the UCC's history as a church which profoundly emphasizes the indispensable participation of the ministry of all believers in the episcopate of the church is a distinct gift which the United Church has to share in the wider world of ecumenical conversation. With these sorts of specifications and clarifications in place, it may be that Anglicans could, in time, come to understand such conciliar features of the UCC expression of episcopate as falling under the "locally adapted in the methods of its administration" stipulation in the Anglican understanding of a church's arrangement of the ministry of the historic episcopate.<sup>61</sup> Should this become possible, full communion may not be far off.

99. While we are aware that the paragraphs above ask a great deal of the United Church, we also suggest that the Anglican Church of Canada would subsequently need to show itself prepared to be called by the UCC to steps of similar costly commitment for the sake of healing relationship and witnessing to unity. To this end we wonder whether, on the grounds of the UCC taking the kinds of steps described above to potentially establish a basis for differentiated consensus in our respective local adaptations of the personal ministries of historical episcopate, the Anglican Church of Canada would consider, for the sake of our unity, a full recognition to the orders of United Church Ordained Ministers. This would include not only future UCC

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61. For comparison we might think of the way that Methodist polity would remain largely unchanged in the proposed full communion relationship with the Church of England, except for the Methodist President coming also to be styled as an President-bishop, being ordained to that ministry by Methodist Past-Presidents, and with the President-bishop playing an essential role in all future Methodist Church UK ordinations.

Ordained Ministers, but also those ordained prior to the more explicit resumption of the sign of officers ordained to carry out the personal elements of the ministry of episcopate, such that they would be able to serve in ministry fully in an Anglican context without any act of conditional or supplemental ordination. While this would certainly represent a departure from present Anglican canonical norms, Anglicans have a history with the concept of accepting a degree of variance in certain matters of polity for the sake of the greater good of overcoming broken ecclesial communion, namely in the process of establishing full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in 2001.<sup>62</sup>

100. Beyond this, and as the corresponding mirror to the Anglican invitation to the UCC to explore more personal expressions of historic episcopate for the sake of unity, we would encourage the United Church to ask the ACC to consider implementing governance structures and processes which enable more direct and regular contributions of the laity and other clergy in carrying out the ministry of episcopate in the church. Concretely, this might include: 1) Involving the laity more explicitly and visibly in the services of ordination in the Anglican tradition, and 2) Expanding opportunities for all orders of ministry — lay, diaconal, and presbyteral — to genuinely contribute to the discernment and decision-making of bishops in synod.

101. As at least one formal expression of the inauguration of any such potential full communion future between our churches in Canada, we also take a page from international ecumenical wisdom. We can envision a time when, in areas of geographic overlap or proximity, nearby Anglican bishops are invited to participate along with their United Church siblings in the commissioning of future UCC Ministers of Vocation and Regional Council Presidents, and where such UCC bearers of an office of episcopate are also welcomed to do the same alongside of the episcopal consecrators at the ordination of future ACC bishops. The intention of such actions would be to enact and signify how the respective ministries of episcopate in each church, which have always existed in both churches in different forms, are now desiring to receiving a gift of healing and grace from the participation and prayers of the other church as they mutually seek to function more fully together as visible signs and instruments of communion in the one Body of Christ.

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62. The Anglican Church of Canada applied a this when it chose to recognize the orders of all Lutheran pastors who had been ordained prior to the resumption of the office of bishop in the ELCIC, and to see them as able to minister fully in ACC congregations without any acts of conditional or supplemental ordination. See *The Waterloo Declaration*, section D paragraph 1.

# CONCLUSION

102. Of course, full communion is also about far more than simply the mutual recognition of ministers and ministries, or of episcopal ministers. It also entails a deepening of common confession and witness to Jesus Christ, the privilege to celebrate together and share in the sacraments of the New Covenant, the ability to participate in and contribute to one another's processes of discernment and decision making, and a partnership in witness, service, and justice in the world in the way of the Gospel. It is these fruits of full communion which we especially wish to keep in the forefront of people's minds in our churches, with the polity questions understood as the necessary groundwork to get us moving there. In a world where differences and divisions abound, we must never underestimate the value of raising up an alternative vision which says that unity in reconciled diversity, and diversity in unity, are not only possible, but are the mandate of all who seek to follow in the Jesus Way.

103. Any deepening of connections between the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada also needs to keep in mind the partnerships each of the churches have with other ecclesiastical bodies, and Indigenous faith communities. This is especially critical because these specific bilateral agreements being sought between our churches have significant potential implications for our Indigenous partners and our full communion partners.

104. We have heard from Indigenous leaders that self-determining Indigenous churches which are related to our two churches must be invited and welcomed to continue to provide representation, input, and reflection with regard to the implications which further steps towards greater unity between the ACC and UCC would have in Indigenous contexts and in their own ecumenical relationships. It is true that conversations about the theology, traditions, and practices in our churches regarding the location and exercise of authority in the church can be occasions simply for the continuation of attitudes of colonialism, or as an opportunity for new possibilities and an exchange of gifts. Continued discussion among the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada thus needs to also explore the role, place, and exercise of authority within the self-determining Indigenous churches, dioceses, councils, and circles, so that a future full communion relationship leaves room to be enriched and shaped by these insights as well.

105. The Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada also have full communion agreements with various other partner churches. For example, the ACC is in a full communion partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the United Church of Canada is in a full communion agreement with both the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. A deepening ecumenical relationship between the UCC and ACC should reflect and incorporate the rich resources of the partnerships and full communion agreements each church already has, and lead to further dialogue possibilities that would further enrich all participants, not just our

two church bodies. Thus, the scope of any future agreements reached between the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada need to keep in mind these other full communion partners, both so that existing relationships continue to be supported and realized to the same degree, and new possibilities for partnership with each other's existing full communion partners are opened up and encouraged as well.

106. On this journey towards communion we recognize that many challenges remain, and there is much more work to be done. Nevertheless, we press on. Both of our churches have in their respective histories understood themselves as bearing unique vocations within the movement for Christian unity. As we continue the conversation together on the way we must keep this calling ever before us, knowing that it is the will of Christ "that all may be one" which will have the final word.