



FINAL REPORT

of the

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA – THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA DIALOGUE

2017–2020

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O N E

MANDATE

The Mandate of the 2017-2020 iteration of the bi-lateral dialogue between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada arose out of the 2016 “Recommendations” from the document *Called to Unity in Mission*, the report of the 2013-2016 of the same Dialogue.

Specifically, as a concrete expression of our unity in mission, this Dialogue was asked to pursue a way forward on mutual recognition of ministry between our two churches, building on the existing work of previous conversations in the following ways:

As we explored the question “What is mutual recognition of Ministry?”, we focused on how degrees of mutual recognition currently manifest themselves at the grassroots level. We wanted to encourage local judicatories in their work of licensing ministers, and in the task of supporting shared ministry initiatives. To this end we gathered diverse stories of ecumenical shared ministries across the country, asking what helped them begin and thrive. We especially looked at places where creative steps have been taken and where forms of mutual recognition of ministry are taking shape.

We agreed that our best way forward at this time is to focus on encouraging and supporting steps towards partial mutual recognition in particular contexts where this could be uniquely possible or desirable (shared ministries, chaplaincies, etc.). We asked ourselves: “How do we facilitate current work without having to establish a formal agreement between our national denominations? What are we already doing? How can we help people do that effectively, efficiently, and not be afraid to try it?”

In the area of episcopate, we sought to draw heavily on other work done by Anglican-Methodist and Anglican-Reformed/Presbyterian bodies in other parts of the world, and then seek to apply the insights harvested from these sources to the present systems of governance in both our churches in Canada. Because certain steps in governance review and restructuring have recently been undertaken by both the Anglican and United churches, we felt this to be an especially opportune time to offer some suggestions pulled from the wider *oikumene*.

T W O

INFLUENCES

The work of this dialogue was directly affected by several significant events in the life of both church and world.

In the United Church, the Proposal on “One Order of Ministry” from General Council 42 (2015), called Remit #6, failed to gain the necessary approval to be put into effect in 2018. The ACC-UCC dialogue was anticipating that approval of “One Order of Ministry” would influence our work toward mutual recognition of ministry between the two denominations. When it did not, efforts needed to be redirected to respect the outcomes of that decision.

Another development from General Council 43 (2018) was the approval of a significant restructuring of the polity and governance of the United Church, known as Remit #1. Prior to the General Council, at our June 2018 meeting, the dialogue met with the Rev. David Allen (Remit Implementation Project Leader) for a focused conversation on mutual recognition and the ministry of episcopate. Following GC43, the dialogue was debriefed on the emerging new structures within the UCC system, where Regional Ministers would carry the primary responsibility for overseeing Congregational matters, and with the national Office of Vocation having oversight of personnel issues.

In the midst of our work as a Dialogue, both churches also took actions related to other partner churches. In 2018-19, the UCC established a full communion agreement with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. In 2019, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and The Episcopal Church developed a Memorandum of Mutual Recognition of Full Communion, intentionally deepening their communion partnerships. Expanding relations of full communion with other partners certainly has a bearing on how we view these possibilities in our own relationship.

It is also important to highlight another significant movement during this dialogue in relation to Indigenous members of our churches. Both the ACC and UCC were working toward and formalizing self-determination of Indigenous congregations and churches within each of our denominations, and have seen several major concrete steps taken to advance the emergence of those Indigenous ecclesial bodies. We celebrate this together, and also see in it opportunities for the whole Church to consider questions about polity and inter-church relations in a fresh light.

We conclude our dialogue as the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated change within the Canadian church. With the increasing accessibility of on-line worship, people have been experiencing a wider variety of worship. One example of this was the Canadian Council of Churches online ecumenical Pentecost worship event on May 30, 2020 “Together in One Place” (Acts 2:1), with a wide diversity of ecumenical leadership from across Canada, in French and English, with over 750 people registering. It remains to be seen how these experiments with worship and ministry will have long term effect on our two churches and our ecumenical relationships. We have experience in our ability to adapt quickly to new situations, which may expand our courage for change. We also wonder if this will help us focus on our Christian identity rather than our denominational identity.

T H R E E

WHAT WE DID

1. Dialogue Meetings

- The Dialogue group held four face-to-face meetings:
 - Nov. 27-30, 2017: Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga
 - June 11-14, 2018: Queen’s House Retreat and Renewal Centre, Saskatoon
 - Feb. 20-22, 2019: Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga
 - Feb. 19-21, 2020: Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga
- The group also held three full-group video conferences, plus several video conferences of several members to focus on specific tasks.
- On Feb. 27, 2020, a national leadership meeting took place between the two churches to discuss progress and hopes for the Anglican/United Church relationship. Present were the following:
 - Anglican Church of Canada: Archbishop Linda Nicholls (Primate), the Rev. Peter Wall (Acting General Secretary), the Rev. Canon Dr. Scott Sharman (Animator for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations)
 - United Church of Canada: the Right Rev. Richard Bott (Moderator), Nora Sanders (General Secretary), the Rev. Dr. John Young (Executive Minister, Theological Leadership), Dr. Gail Allan (Coordinator, Ecumenical, Interchurch and Interfaith Relations)

2. Documents Produced (all are appended to this report)

Key Texts:

The main written work of the Dialogue consists of two substantive texts, representing the two foci set out for this Dialogue iteration: to explore “mutual recognition” of our ministries from “below,” by describing some of the actual places where creative steps have been taken, where there is a form of mutual recognition and sharing of ministry taking place; and by considering more deeply the question of episcopate: how it functions in our two churches, and where we see potential ways forward. These texts are appended to this report:

- a. Sharing Ministry Ecumenically: Creating and Sustaining Ecumenical Shared Ministries – Some Insights and Guidelines
- b. A Ministry of Unity: Further Reflections on Episcopate in the Anglican and United Churches in Canada

Other Texts:

- c. Statement of Mutual Affirmations and Commitments (Feb. 2019)
The group also sought to remind our two churches of the many mutual recognitions which they have already made with one another in prior dialogue documents, by producing a statement of mutual affirmations and commitments based on the dialogue documents of 1972-2016. This statement was presented as a resolution and received at the General Synod of the Anglican Church in July 2019; and by the Executive of the General Council of the United Church of Canada in November 2019.
- d. Communiqué from the Anglican-United Church Dialogue (Feb. 2019)
The Dialogue group, at its February 2019 meeting, discussed a decision of a regional court of the United Church of Canada concerning the Rev. Gretta Vosper. In the interest of advancing greater clarity and understanding in ecumenical relations, the Dialogue judged it important to share key information concerning that decision.
- e. Letter to Remit Implementation Committee (June 2018)
As the United Church prepared to vote on a series of remits that would significantly alter the church's governance structures, the Dialogue group sent a letter to the Remit Implementation Committee, asking how the new structures would continue to reflect the historic gifts of the antecedent forms of polity which have influenced the life of the United Church through its history, considering especially the oversight ministries of the new Regional Councils. As a result of these structural changes the United Church appointed the Rev. Dr. Andrew Richardson, Office of Vocation minister for the three Atlantic regions, as a member of the Dialogue (2019-2020).

3. Other Dialogue Activities

a. Conversation with US Episcopal-Methodist Dialogue

We were joined by videoconference with the Rev. Jordan Haynie-Ware, a recently concluded member of the Episcopal-Methodist dialogue in the USA who is now serving as a priest in the Diocese of Edmonton. Jordan spoke to us about their work related to mutual recognition and the ministry of episcopate, as well as future steps towards full communion between those two American churches.

b. Public Event – Saskatoon (June 2018)

The Dialogue hosted a public event, at which local Anglican and United Church clergy and laity were invited to hear about the work of the Dialogue. Approximately 30 persons attended as the co-chairs and dialogue staff offered brief presentations, followed by Q&A and refreshments.

c. Conversation with Former Dialogue Participants (June 2018)

Both former Co-Chair the Rev. Dr. Bill Harrison and former member of the 2012-2016 iteration of the dialogue, the Rev. Don Koots, were present in Saskatoon during the Dialogue meeting, and so visited the dialogue, offering insights from their dialogue experience and current analysis.

d. Conversation with David Allen (June 2018)

The Rev. David Allen, Remit Implementation Project Leader, who was assisting in preparations for enacting the remits that were coming before the United Church General Council in 2018 for adoption, having been circulated to the presbyteries. He outlined the proposed new governance structure and responded to questions pertinent to the Dialogue. In particular, we asked him to address the following:

- How governance will happen within the regions
- What the roles might be for regional staff
- How clergy will be overseen (Nationally? Regionally?)
- What powers congregations will have to form partnerships – eg, Ecumenical Shared Ministries (ESMs) – and how congregations will be supported
- How ministries that were formerly funded and overseen by presbyteries might be governed (e.g. ecumenical chaplaincies)

e. International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (August 2018)

The Dialogue's co-chairs were invited guests at the one-week annual meeting of this dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Anglican Communion, held at the Vancouver School of Theology. They were invited to share the history of Anglican-Reformed dialogue in Canada, and to participate in their ongoing work on an IRAD text on the nature of *koinonia*.

f. Presentation by Jenny Stephens (February 2019)

The Rev. Jenny Stephens, Office of Vocation Co-ordinator of the United Church of Canada visited the Dialogue group and gave a presentation on Office of Vocation and its work. The Dialogue members discussed with her the understanding of *episcopo* in this new structure.

g. Presentations by Indigenous Church Leaders (February 2019)

The Rev. Maggie Dieter, then Executive Minister, Indigenous Ministries and Justice of the United Church, and the Most Rev. Mark MacDonald, then National Anglican Indigenous Bishop (now Archbishop) of the Anglican Church visited the Dialogue group. Each gave a presentation on the intersection of ecumenical work and Indigenous ministries in the two churches. In both churches significant changes are occurring to governance models and Indigenous members. Because of comity agreements among early missionaries, there are few places where Anglican and United Church Indigenous ministries intersect, other than in urban areas. Both Maggie and Mark agreed that more cooperation could be beneficial in Indigenous settings.

FOUR

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That our two churches receive and circulate the two key dialogue texts: “Sharing Ministry Ecumenically: Creating and Sustaining Ecumenical Shared Ministries – Some Insights and Guidelines” and “A Ministry of Unity: Further Reflections on Episcopé in the Anglican and United Churches in Canada.”
 - “Sharing Ministry Ecumenically” is intended to be formatted as a stand-alone, attractive guide for dioceses, regions, clergy, and lay leaders.
 - “A Ministry of Unity” is a text for theological and ecclesiological consideration, especially, but not limited to, the House of Bishops, the Board of the Office of Vocation, the Faith/Theology committees of our two churches, our theological schools, and ecumenical partners in Canada and globally.

- That our two churches attend to the following summary observations arising from the document “Sharing Ministry”
 - Internal Relationships and Covenants: Strong relationships are rooted in a stance of mutual respect between communities, as well as a resolute commitment to working together across denominations. A memorandum of understanding with a clear review process is fundamental to articulating the values, practices and accountabilities that will shape the way that relationships are lived out in the shared ministry.
 - Judicatory Relations: Healthy relationships of trust and confidence between the judicatory bodies of each denomination are key to building vital and sustainable ecumenical shared ministries, as are healthy relationships between each judicatory and the ecumenical shared ministry itself.
 - Building a Shared Identity: Successful shared ministries have the ability and willingness to develop a shared identity that embraces and affirms both denominational traditions, supported by their judicatory leaders.
 - Outreach Ministries: We can find much in common through shared mission and outreach, social justice, and advocacy.
 - Shared Space: Shared ministry can release us from being tied to our buildings. Sharing space makes for more sustainable congregations.
 - Accepting Risk: Judicatories and faith communities need to recognize and accept the risk of doing a new thing together. Those who engage in shared ministries note that generosity, grace, and respect for differences make the experience joyous.

- That our two churches attend to the following recommendations arising from the document “A Ministry of Unity:”
- Short/Medium Term Recommendations (for a Functional Ministry Sharing Partnership)

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 undertake further research and discussion of the canonical provisions which currently exist in the Church of England and The Episcopal Church 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 consider an adaptation of these to fit the Canadian Anglican context.

In the *United Church*, we would suggest that the Office of Vocation work to develop a policy that allows for full recognition of ordained Anglican ministers, and those with whom they are in full communion, for approval by the General Council

- Long-Term Recommendations (towards a Declaration of Full Communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada)

The *United Church* is invited, for the sake of unity, to consider tangible steps which would enable Anglicans to more readily recognize in those persons who are seen to personally embody elements of the generally conciliar system of episcopal oversight that such persons are carrying out that ministry in unity and succession with what Anglicans mean by the historic episcopate locally adapted.

Anglicans are asked to consider whether more complete acknowledgment that a ministry of personal episcopate is being exercised by identifiable personal officers within the United Church of Canada’s conciliar structure may, for the sake of unity, also be followed by serious consideration of the possibility of the full recognition of the ministries of duly ordered United Church ministers prior to an agreement of full communion and the reconciliation of the two forms of episcopal ministry.

- That our two churches create structures to carry on the work of Anglican-United Church Partnership:
 - We believe that it is time for the work of our two churches to move from a “Dialogue” model to a model of formal relationship that—similar to the Joint Anglican-Lutheran Commission—encourages and coordinates shared life between the churches, responds to emerging needs, and supports practical efforts in common Anglican-United ministry and mission. It is important to model nationally what is also possible locally, and to let our churches know that we are meeting. As both churches adjust to different ways of managing resources, this work may or may not take the form of a formally mandated body, but should at least include:
 - An annual meeting of at least the Primate, Moderator, General Secretaries, and Ecumenical Officers (in-person in Toronto if possible, or electronically as necessary) for the purpose of encouraging communication and collaboration.
- The Ecumenical Officers of both churches being charged to actively encourage more regular and intentional opportunities for communication and collaboration between lead program staff in both churches, especially in areas such as faith/theology, worship, ecumenical/interfaith, justice and public witness.
- That our two churches include the following priorities in any new configuration of their formal relationship:
 - Providing additional resourcing and support for existing or potential Anglican-United shared ministry congregations and community ministries.
 - Assisting judicatory bodies with matters related to ministers and ministry in shared ministry contexts.
 - Promoting a culture in both churches that is shaped by the “Lund Principle”—i.e. seeking to do everything together, except where conscience compels us to act separately. This could include cross-representation on some committees as well as attention to how we partner in healing and reconciliation work.
 - Further exploration of the sharing of physical and human resources.