

IARCCUM - Communiqué - 23 November 2002

The second meeting of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) was held in Malta from 19 to 23 November 2002.

This new body, focusing on communion in mission, was launched a year ago in Lambeth and Rome with strong encouragement for its work by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope John Paul II. At that meeting the Commission began to work in three areas to make further progress towards visible unity between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church which will strengthen the mission of the Church of Christ.

A sub-group of the Commission worked during the past year to prepare a first draft of a common declaration which will formally express the degree of agreement in faith that exists between Anglicans and Catholics, consolidate the results of more than thirty years of dialogue and commit the dialogue partners to a deeper sharing in common life and witness. A second sub-group met and prepared practical recommendations for the next steps in the on-going process of ecumenical reception. The third sub-group focused on visible and practical outcomes of spiritual communion with proposals for pastoral and practical strategies to help the two communions, especially in local contexts, to do together even now whatever is possible in the present stage of real but imperfect communion. Special attention was given to Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations in Africa where there are very large numbers of both Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

During the plenary meeting the preparatory work was presented and discussed very thoroughly. Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, joined the Commission on its final day and shared extensive and most helpful comments on the draft of the declaration.

Regarding the reception of ARCIC texts, the Commission believes that the focus at this stage should be on growth in mutual understanding and study, rather than processes of formal response. Proposals to facilitate the study of ARCIC texts were presented and discussed. An initial proposal has been set forward for the production of a video to facilitate reflection on the developing relationships between Anglicans and Catholics worldwide.

From its experience as an international meeting of bishops, the Commission stressed the importance and fruitfulness of episcopal cooperation and encouraged its expression both locally and regionally.

The meeting was held at Mount St Joseph Retreat House, overlooking St Paul's Bay. Thirty-five years ago, a preparatory commission which set a course for future Anglican-Roman Catholic relations met in this same house, and produced the Malta Report. Members of the Commission pondered the progress which has been made over the past decades, and noted the continuing relevance of the insights of their predecessors. A distinctive characteristic of this Commission is its emphasis on the experience of common prayer and worship within its meetings.

The Commission was greeted with warm hospitality by the Catholic and Anglican communities in Malta, and was especially grateful for the Evensong hosted by Canon Alan Woods and St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral in Valetta, where they were joined in worship by

a large congregation which included religious and civic leaders, among them the President of Malta and the Roman Catholic Archbishop.

The next plenary meeting of the Commission will be from 10th to 14th of June, 2003, in Northern Ireland.

The members of IARCCUM:

Anglicans

Bishop David Beetge (South Africa, Co-Chairman)

Archbishop Peter Carnley (Australia)

Bishop Edwin Gulick (USA)

Archbishop Peter Kwong (Hong Kong)

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali (England, also member of ARCIC)

Dr Mary Tanner (England)

The Revd Canon Jonathan Gough (Archbishop of Canterbury's Office)

Bishop John Baycroft (Co-Secretary, Anglican Communion Office, London)

Roman Catholics

Archbishop John Bathersby (Australia, Co-Chairman)

Archbishop Alexander Brunett (USA, also Co-Chairman of ARCIC)

Bishop Anthony Farquhar (Ireland)

Bishop Crispian Hollis (England)

Bishop Lucius Ugorji (Nigeria)

The Revd Dr Peter Cross (Australia)

Sr Dr Donna Geernaert (Canada)

The Revd Don Bolen (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Co-Secretary)

Consultors

Bishop David Hamid (Gibraltar in Europe)

Monsignor Timothy Galligan (England)

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