

Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue Report

Proposer: Revd Canon Stephen Fielding

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Your Grace, members of General Synod,

In proposing that the report of the Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue is taken into consideration, I first want to note words from one of our two prayers for Christian Unity in the Book of Common Prayer. ‘O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst say to thine Apostles, peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; Regard not our sins, but the faith of thy Church and grant it that peace and unity which is thy will.’ Such is our prayer for unity within our Church and the wide brief and level of engagement of the CCUD reflects the spirit of that prayer in its work throughout this past year.

Under his wise counsel and energetic chairing of the committee’s meetings Bishop Burrows has overseen its work in promoting Christian Unity. I refer you to his executive summary on page 239 of the Book of Reports. The report itself runs for about 23 pages. The committee is a vine with many branches reaching out to be with, engage, promote, support, maintain, encourage and build up unity within the wider body of the Church. Indeed it is good to see the Synod’s ecumenical guests here as signs not only of our ecumenical engagement but of the hand of friendship that continues to be extended from the Church of Ireland to our brothers and sisters in Christ of different traditions as we seek the unity for which Christ prayed.

CCUD’s three main working groups on Anglican, European and Inter-faith matters have been steered by Canon Kevin O’Brien, the Revd Suzanne Cousins, and Canon Katherine Poulton and we thank them for their creativity and commitment this past year. The Revd Suzanne Cousins is seconding this report and may say more about the work of Inter-faith group.

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), the most representative body of gathered Anglicans among the Communion’s instruments of Communion, which meets every three years, is being

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hosted in 2026 by the Church of Ireland. Its role is to facilitate the co-operative work of the churches of the Anglican Communion, exchange information and co-ordinate common action. It seeks to develop common policies with respect to the world mission of the Church, including ecumenical matters. I know the Archbishop of Armagh is looking forward to hosting ACC-19 in Belfast.

My own area of responsibility as Porvoo Contact Person for the Church of Ireland took myself and the Archbishop of Dublin, who chairs the Porvoo Contact Group, to a Church Leaders' Consultation on God's World – Proclaiming hope for future generations in the midst of the environmental crisis. The meeting was in Siguna in Sweden and Archdeacon Andrew Orr attended as a delegate and spoke of his work in schools and projects. The contribution of our Church was well-received and reflects our interest and commitment to the Porvoo Communion of Churches uniting 15 Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Europe going back more than twenty-five years.

I'm grateful to all who responded to the recent survey on past and current connections with the Porvoo Churches. The survey reported an interest in wishing to learn more about the Porvoo Communion, past links which have resulted in lasting friendships, and connections and the value of having engaged with a Church of another Christian tradition on an exchange or taken part in shared services. A weekly prayer diary for the Communion is available on the porvoocommunion.org website enabling us to recall the parts of the Porvoo Declaration which commit the churches who have signed it 'to share a common life', and to 'pray for and with one another.'

As Maurice Elliott has noted in his report from the Meissen Commission 'whereas the central aspiration of the Meissen Agreement is towards full visible unity, the most significant challenge

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against this remains interchangeability of ministry.’ This theme runs through some of our reports and indeed the Porvoo Communion is actively seeking ways to enable transitivity of ministry that will bring together other Anglican and Lutheran Churches with the Porvoo Communion.

In the autumn the Porvoo Communion of Churches meets in Cardiff around the theme ‘Christology and Ecumenism – marking the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed’. It is one of those statements that draws us together as a credal church. It was written down at a time before the schism of 1054 and the Reformation. It describes the nature of God and the centrality of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. I hope that keeping Nicaea 2025 in mind in the words of Bishop Mike Royal from Churches Together will ‘give us the chance to speak as one Church about the Christ we love and seek to serve through the work of the church in the world’. In continuing that work of the Church, let us remember the words of St Francis of Assisi ‘to preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.’

Words of course are indispensable and there is much to read and take encouragement from in this report and so it is with that in mind Archbishop I propose that the report of the Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue be taken into consideration.