

Preparatory Meeting for the Anglican Oriental Orthodox International Commission

Dunford House, Midhurst, England, 27-30 July 2001

Communiqué

Under the co-chairmanship of His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop-Designate of Gibraltar in Europe (the Church of England Diocese in Europe), Anglican and Oriental Orthodox representatives, delegated by their Churches, met to consider the recommendations of the Lambeth Conferences of 1988 and 1998 and decisions of Oriental Orthodox Churches that the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox dialogue be upgraded from a Forum (1985-1993) to a Commission.

The delegates to this preparatory meeting noted that the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Oriental Orthodox Churches have enjoyed a long history of cordial relations and pastoral contact in many regions of the world. They affirmed that the time is now right to seek agreement in faith by addressing theological issues of common interest and concern, as part of the response to our Lord's great intercessory prayer, that His disciples might be one as He and the Father are one "that the world might believe". It was thus agreed to establish the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission. The delegates also established the agenda, and clarified matters related to the membership, procedures, methodologies and timetable for the new Commission.

The first plenary meeting will be held in Armenia from 7 - 12 June 2002, at the invitation of the Catholicosate of All Armenians.

The agenda for the Commission includes topics related to Christology and Pneumatology, authority in the Church, Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, ecclesiology, sacraments, moral issues, the place of women in the Church and matters of concern to the Churches in their mission and pastoral care. The Commission will begin the work of dialogue on issues of Christology in the hope of preparing an agreed statement, so that Anglicans and Oriental Orthodox may be able to proclaim formally a common faith in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The preparatory committee affirmed that any insights from regional dialogues and forums regarding the Christological issues would be welcome, including any views on the importance and significance of agreement in this area for the joint witness and mission of our Churches.

The participants acknowledged with gratitude the messages of greeting and support for this planning process which were conveyed from the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and from the Archbishop of Canterbury. The members of the preparatory committee expressed their joy, and congratulated the Armenian Church, in this year when the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia is being celebrated.

The delegates received information on scholarship and exchange programmes aimed to encourage contact between Oriental Orthodox Churches and Churches of the Anglican Communion and expressed their appreciation for the ways these programmes enrich mutual understanding.

The meeting was held in the context of daily morning and evening prayer. Joint sessions were interspersed with separate meetings for the representatives of the two Church families to enable co-ordinated participation and contribution to the overall planning. On Sunday, members were welcomed to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at Winchester Cathedral. The Rt Revd John Hind, the Bishop of Chichester, in whose diocese the meeting took place, visited Dunford House to extend his personal greetings to the delegates.

The members expressed their gratitude to the Anglican Communion for providing accommodation and hospitality at Dunford House.

The members of the preparatory committee were:

Oriental Orthodox

HE Metropolitan Bishoy (Co-Chairman), Coptic Orthodox Church
HE Metropolitan Mor Eustathius Matta Roham, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
His Grace Bishop Yeznik Petrossian, Armenian Catholicosate of All Armenians
The Very Revd Nareg Alemezian (Co-Secretary), Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia
The Revd Fr Seife-Sellassie Yohannes, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church
The Revd Fr Modiyil S. Skariah, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Catholicate of the East

Anglicans

The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell (Co-Chairman), Church of England
The Rt Revd John Craig Stewart, Anglican Church in Australia
The Rt Revd George Clive Handford, Anglican Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East (unable to attend)
The Revd Canon Harold J. Nahabedian, Anglican Church of Canada
The Very Revd Dr William Taylor, Church of England
The Revd Canon Professor J. Robert Wright, Episcopal Church, USA

Ex-officio

The Revd Canon David Hamid (Co-Secretary), Director of Ecumenical Affairs and Studies, Anglican Communion Office

Administrative Staff

Mrs Christine Codner, Anglican Communion Office

Observers

His Grace Bishop Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Church
HE Metropolitan Seraphim, Coptic Orthodox Church

The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell
Anglican Co-Chairman

HE Metropolitan Bishoy
Oriental Orthodox Co-Chairman