



International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue Communiqué 31 October 2015, Kochi, India

The International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD) between the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Anglican Communion met for its historic inaugural meeting in Kochi, in the State of Kerala, India, 26 to 31 October 2015. The Co-Chairs are The Revd Elizabeth Welch (Reformed) and The Most Revd David Chillingworth (Anglican).

This was the first time that the Anglican and Reformed Communions have met in a formal dialogue at the global level since 1984, when the dialogue finalized its agreement statement, *God's Reign and our Unity*. Following an exploratory meeting in 2011, there has been fresh energy and enthusiasm for a new round of dialogue between the two Communions. The dialogue has been mandated to study to the nature of communion (*koinonia*), a wide range of missiological challenges facing the two Communions, and the sources wherein the work of the Spirit may be discerned, notably authority and governance, episcopacy and episcopacy.

The theme of this first meeting has been ‘The Nature of Communion’ drawing on the New Testament word *koinonia*, being invoked today to describe the nature of the interrelationships between churches.

As part of its preliminary reflection on the nature of communion, there were presentations and discussion on the topic from the perspectives of the Old and New Testaments, and Church history. Seventeenth century English Reformed theology was put in dialogue with contemporary Orthodox theology. The African concept of *Ubuntu* was placed in dialogue with New Testament understandings of communion. The perspectives on communion from recent WCC document *The Church: Towards A Common Vision* played an important role in the conversation. Communion in relation to understandings of the nature of community and of Holy Communion proved a helpful part of the discussion.

The dialogue began with a celebration of Holy Communion using a liturgy of the United Reformed Church at which the Anglican Co-Chair preached, and closed with a celebration of Holy Communion according to the Scottish Episcopal liturgy, at which the Reformed Co-Chair preached. The members of the dialogue prayed together each morning and evening.

This first meeting of the Commission was hosted by the WCRC and facilitated by the Church of South India (CSI), which is itself an organic union including Anglican and Reformed churches. The CSI contributed two local scholars as participants to this meeting of the dialogue; their many contributions and perspectives context, theological education and being

a minority church greatly enriched the discussion. The contribution of the local participants was so vital to the meeting, that it gave rise to the hope that at each meeting of the dialogue, representatives of the local churches be invited to attend.

Members of the Commission were honoured to be welcomed by Bishop Thomas K. Oommen (Deputy Moderator of the CSI) and The Reverend Dr D. R. Sadananda (General Secretary of the CSI).

To enable understanding of the Christian culture of south-west India in its Portuguese, Dutch and English forms, the CSI arranged for a memorable visit to St Francis' Church, Fort Kochi. The Commission also paid a moving visit to the fifteenth synagogue at Fort Kochi belonging to a now small Jewish community.

The Commission spent a day in intense discussion of its mandate, clarifying priorities, and critically reflecting on guiding themes for the way ahead. It will meet again in early September 2016.

Members of the Dialogue present at the meeting:

Anglicans

The Most Revd David Chillingworth
Scottish Episcopal Church

Dr Clint Le Bruyns
Anglican Church of Southern Africa

The Revd Prof Dr Renta Nishihara
Nippon Sei Ko Kai

The Revd Dr Amy E. Richter
The Episcopal Church

The Rt Revd Kumara Illangasinghe
(Consultant)
Church of Ceylon

Staff

The Revd Canon Dr John Gibaut
(Co-Secretary)
The Revd Neil Vigers

Reformed

The Revd Elizabeth Welch Co-Chair
United Reformed Church

The Very Rev Professor Iain Torrance
The Church of Scotland

The Revd Dr Royce M Victor
Church of South India

The Revd Fundiswa Amanda Kobo
(Consultant) Uniting Presbyterian Church
in Southern Africa

The Revd Helené Van Tonder
Dutch Reformed Church

Staff

The Revd Dr Douwe Visser
(Co-Secretary)

CSI observers

The Revd Dr Allan Samuel Palanna

The Revd Sharath Sowseelya