

Triennial report on Episcopal Church-Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Dialogue

January 23, 2018

THE EPISCOPAL PRESBYTERIAN BI-LATERAL DIALOGUE

RECOMMENDATION

The Episcopal Presbyterian Bi-lateral Dialogue committee recommends to the 223rd General Assembly (2018) and the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church (2018):

1. The bi-lateral dialogue be continued and meet until 2024, a year in which both the General Assembly and the General Convention will meet, and report back to those bodies at that time.
2. Furthermore, we recommend the Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and The Episcopal Church's Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations work with the committee in fulfilling paragraph 9 by developing and publishing mission and polity guidelines and guides for joint Episcopal and Presbyterian ministries and missions, such as how dioceses and presbyteries may collaborate in creating new worshipping communities and ecumenical congregations.
3. Finally, we recommend that the next round of dialogue cover the following:

What does membership mean amid the shifting American religious context (relating to paragraph 1 and 6 of the Agreement)?

What can lead to full reconciliation of ordered ministries, including the implications to our global ecumenical relationships? This would include seeking out and consulting the wisdom of other national and international Reformed-Anglican dialogues, including recently published reports of member judicatories in our communions and standing bilateral bodies of national/international churches (e.g., the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church) (relating to paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 7, and 10 of the Agreement).

Recognizing we are in a post-Christendom world, and using a historic and socio-economic lens, explore and examine how our ecclesiological identities, doctrines, systems and institutions have been used with prejudicial power in areas of class and race to "other-ize" and exclude people from our denominations. What "idols" do we have that prevents us from fully participating in God's mission and reconcile all things, including our two denominations, to God (relating, again, to paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 7, and 10 of the Agreement)?

RATIONALE

We have discovered that in our conversations we have gained much from the opportunity to spend extended time in dialogue, building trust, learning from each other, and finding the ability to be bold in questioning and challenging our own and each other's assumptions. We believe that continuing our conversation and exploration holds the promise of yielding enhanced understanding and guidance for our two denominations to explore in moving toward greater implementation and celebration of the unity God has already established in the Body of Christ, our common home.

BACKGROUND

The Episcopal Presbyterian Bi-lateral Dialogue (2009-2018)

The Participants

The Episcopal Church appointed the following persons to serve on the dialogue: the Right Reverend Eugene Sutton (co-chair, 2009-current), the Reverend Canon Amy Coultas (2009-2015), the Reverend Canon Elise Johnstone (2017), the Reverend Dr. Timothy Mulder (2009-current), the Honorable Joanne O'Donnell (2009-current), Ms. Elizabeth Ring (2016-current), the Reverence Dr. Joseph Wolyniak (2016-current), the Reverend Dr. Joseph Pagano (2013-2016), the Reverend Dan Krewtzer (2009-2013). The Reverend Margaret Rose and Mr. Richard Mammana served as staff.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA) appointed the following persons to serve on the dialogue: the Reverend Dr. Dennis Hughes (co-chair, 2009-2016), Elder Anne Bond (2009-current), the Reverend Dr. Christian Boyd (2009-current, co-chair 2016-current), the Reverend Kamal Hassan (2009-current), and Deacon/Ruling Elder Gordon Zerkel (2009-current), the Reverend Dr. Robert Foltz-Morrison (2017-current). The Reverend Robina Winbush served as staff.

We would like to note the Reverend Dennis James Hughes, Ph.D., entered into the joy of God's kingdom on Easter morning, Sunday, April 16, 2017, at his home in Edmonds, Washington. He was 73.

Meetings

The dialogue team met times on the following dates, November 2010 (Louisville), May 2011 (Washington, DC), December 2011 (San Diego), May 2012 (Chicago), May 2013 (Seattle), January 2014 (Chicago), November 2014 (Denver), May 2015 (Phone), November 2015 (Berkeley), September 2016 (Chicago), April 2017 (Baltimore), and October 2017 (Chicago).

Issues Addressed

In our search for greater understanding of each other's history, polity and practice, this committee has explored many topics, including:

- Demographic similarities and dissimilarities of our denominations;
- Historical, cultural and social factors that shape our understanding of one another which go back as far as our shared history in Scotland;
- Our varied understandings of liturgy, its role in worship, as well as liturgical oversight;
- Understanding of the sacraments and sacramentals;
- What confirmation means in our two communions, in relation to baptism and membership.
- The nature and shared mission of the Church as incarnated in each of our churches;
- Our current ecumenical engagements, as well as finding common ground through our shared full communion agreements (i.e. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Moravian Church).

In accordance with the mandate given us in the Agreement adopted by the PCUSA General Assembly in 2008 and ratified by the presbyteries in 2009 and the TEC General Convention in 2009, we focused our discussions on paragraphs 3, 4 and 7 of the Agreement. This included extended conversations about:

- Three-fold ordered ministry, as well as the expression of ordered ministries at the local level (congregation and diocese);
 - The historic episcopate as well as the embodiment of episkopé;
 - Our understanding of each other's ordered ministry, with recognition that these orders, although different, are valid expressions of apostolic ministry;
- The use of the CUIC Eucharistic liturgy as a vehicle for shared Eucharistic ministry;
- Examples of shared congregational ministry; highlights being our conversation with a joint Episcopal/Presbyterian congregation in Minnesota and our meeting with the Bishop of the Chicago Diocese and the Executive Presbyter of the Chicago Presbytery.

The Dialogue confirmed that historically, Anglicanism and Presbyterianism grew up as cousins, if not siblings, in England, Scotland and later in Ireland and Wales, and these traditions were transplanted into the American context during the colonial period. Having had common roots in Britain, as well as in the colonies, and being generally of similar socio-economic and educational levels, Presbyterians and Episcopalians have over the years engaged in conversations towards unity on and off since the 1890s. Many times, the breakdown in ecumenical dialogue and potential full communion agreements had less to do with theology or ecclesiology, but more to do with cultural and socio-economic factors.

What the committee has discovered through this on-going dialogue is that we have a shared DNA. Like fraternal twins that were separated during the 18th century, we each developed in ways that could be divergent and keep us from being re-united or in full communion. The committee, however, views the two churches as complimentary, perhaps by divine institution. We firmly hold that neither church, in any means, is deficient. For instance, we found both churches exercise episkopé communally, collegially and personally, yet in different, and we think, complimentary ways. In addition, the committee affirmed the fullness of the baptismal ministry in each church's

members, and that members who transfer should be welcomed as members without the need of confirmation or laying on of hands. We remain committed to overcoming the institutional division of our two churches and to find the unity required by God so we all may fully engage in the mission of God and be a living witness of the holy communion we already share in Christ.

As we reflect on our time together and what we have learned about each other, we cannot help but also address the role our co-chair, the Reverend Dr. Dennis Hughes, had in the process. He valiantly remained engaged in the Dialogue till his last days. For us, his sisters and brothers on the Episcopal Presbyterian Dialogue, Dennis was an embodiment of the ecumenical movement, and passionate about Christ's prayer that all churches be one. Dennis' life experiences — personal, academic and pastoral — constantly informed and enlightened our work together. His stories and words of wisdom many times brought us back to our common theology and liturgical expressions in baptism and holy communion, and what the practical implications were regarding our unified witness to our Lord. In his perspective, our two churches were already in full communion; for in Christ we are one (Ephesians 4:4-6). However, we obscure the visible reality constantly by putting other things as more important above Christ and the mission of God that we are to incarnate as Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. It is in Dennis' persistence in the Gospel that continues on in, with, and through us — as he fulfilled his baptism and now is numbered among the great cloud of witnesses, encouraging both of our communions in our next steps to make God's reality our own.

Bi-lateral Dialogue History

It has been over fifty years since the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, proposed in a sermon at Grace Episcopal Cathedral, San Francisco, the establishment of a dialogue between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, in the hope that this would result in a united church that would be “truly catholic, truly reformed, and truly evangelical”. This would later be expanded to include the United Methodist Church and, subsequently, seven other denominations, including three historically black Methodist denominations. This would give rise to the Consultation on Church Union, which would subsequently be succeeded in this vision in 2001 by Churches Uniting in Christ, with ten denominations from the Reformed, Anglican, Methodist and Moravian traditions.

Born alike in the ferment of the Reformation Era of pre-Stuart Britain, Presbyterianism and Episcopalianism grew up as cousins, if not siblings, in England, Scotland and later in Ireland and Wales, and the colonists brought their preferences to the New World. While the episcopal polity of the Church of England suffered there from years of neglect by the home country — never did an English bishop visit the colonies in the nearly 200 years from the Jamestown settlement until the American Revolution, nor were the colonies Permitted to have a bishop of their own — the Church of England was actually established as the state church in several colonies.

While some of the newly independent Americans were Presbyterian by conviction, others, though Episcopalian by preference, came to favor Presbyterian polity as a matter of necessity. In 1782

William White of Philadelphia wrote a tract entitled *The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered* in which he advocated a Presbyterian polity for the new denomination which would take the place of the previous state Church of England, it being unlikely in his view that the newly independent Americans would be able to procure bishops ordained in the “historic succession” from their former English mentors. Many of White’s ideas in this treatise became part of the new Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, including the representation of lay people at every level of its governance, White was subsequently elected as Bishop of Pennsylvania, consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury and recognized as the first Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church at its organizing convention in 1789. The 1784 consecration of Samuel Seabury to be Bishop of Connecticut by non-juring Scottish bishops had rendered moot the question of where the American church would find bishops in the “historic episcopate”. Having had common roots in Britain, as well as in the colonies, and being generally of similar socio-economic and educational levels, Presbyterians and Episcopalians, as those formerly loyal to the Church of England were now called, have over the years enjoyed a great degree of interpersonal relationship, with varying degrees of mutual respect and understanding. Over the years there has never been a time when some in both denominations have not looked toward the establishment of greater unity between them.

The definitive statement of the basis for church union in the Episcopal Church, indeed in Anglicanism as a whole, is the so-called Chicago Quadrilateral of 1886 (better known since its adoption by the world-wide Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1888 as the Lambeth Quadrilateral. Originally an invitation by the American Episcopal Bishops to discussions of union with various other church bodies, The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. alone responded. Despite a proposal in 1946 for organic church union, there were no permanent results of these discussions and as Gibson Winter observed long before the current round of bi-lateral discussions, “The fact, however, that these two churches had once enjoyed a brief courtship is probably one of the main lessons for the second courtship forty years later.” [Presbyterian-Episcopal Negotiations the U.S.A (1937-1946)]. Several courtships later, the members of the Presbyterian/Episcopal Bi-Lateral Dialogue are in agreement, as well as with the conviction that this dialogue must not fade into what Gibson called “polite exchanges of resolutions of friendship”. The potential benefits are too great, the consequences of inaction too dire; the need for wholeness and Godly vision too urgent!

Consultation on Church Union to Churches Uniting in Christ

The more recent movement of Presbyterian/Episcopal dialogue begun within the wider purview of the Consultation on Church Union’s development of the document *Churches in Covenant Communion: The Church of Christ Uniting* which ultimately produced in 1985 *The COCU Consensus – In Quest of a Church Uniting*, a Second Draft of which was approved by the COCU Plenary meeting in St. Louis in 1988. This draft was ultimately deemed inadequate by both the Presbyterian Church USA and the Episcopal Church in the USA because of disagreements over the conclusions of Section VII “MINISTRY”. This lack of resolution over its primary document foreshadowed the institutional end of COCU and its transformation in January 2001, into *Churches Uniting in Christ*, a new relationship between nine-member churches and one Partner in Mission

and Ministry (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) with the Roman Catholic Church as an observer body.

With authorization from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) and the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (TEC), both partners in CUIC, the two denominations entered once again into a formal bi-lateral dialogue. At their initial meeting, held concurrently with the inauguration of CUIC in January 2001, it was decided that the dialogue's conversations would take place within the larger context of CUIC's Ministry Task Force, which was to focus its work on revisiting the issues of Chapter VII of The COCU Consensus, eventually developing a report on Mutual Recognition and Mutual Reconciliation of Ministry (MRMRM).

The Episcopal Presbyterian Dialogue (2002-2008)

The previous dialogue team met twice annually since its first meeting in January 2001. It has met in various venues of each denomination including seminaries (Fuller, Louisville) and middle judicatory offices, with diocesan bishops, General Presbyters and parochial clergy, including twice at Indian Hill Presbyterian-Episcopal Church in Cincinnati and once at St. Matthew's Episcopal/Wilton Presbyterian Church in Wilton, Connecticut. It has met with prominent theologians (e.g. the Rev. Drs. Mudge, Small and Wright) of each tradition, as well as in conjunction with the Ministry Task Force of CUIC (of which the Presbyterian Co-Convener is a member). During this time the Episcopal Co-Convener served two two-year terms as an ecumenical member of the General Assembly Council of PCUSA and as an Ecumenical Advisor to PCUSA's Richmond General Assembly. A member of the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Relations of TEC during much of his tenure as Co-Convener, he also has met several times with the CUIC Coordinating Council of CUIC in his capacity as a member of CUIC's Local and Regional Task Force and he will serve as proxy for the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church at the meeting of Heads of Communion at CUIC's forthcoming Plenary Session I St. Louis. The Rev. Drs. Phillip Wickeri and George Telford have served as members of the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the PCUSA.

The Dialogue had extensively examined relevant documents and deliberations from the past and present both in the United States and abroad, including the Formula of Agreement between the PCUSA and the ELCA, UCC and RCA denominations, the Call to Common Mission document between the Episcopal Church and the ELCA, and the Mutual Recognition and Mutual Reconciliation document of CUIC. At every meeting of the Dialogue, members have worshipped together using rites approved by either denomination or according to the authorized CUIC liturgy, with ordained ministers of each denomination officiating.

Among the most significant achievements of the Dialogue was the co-sponsorship with CUIC of a Consultation on Episcopate held in St. Louis in October 2006. Although the Dialogue identified the need for such a serious theological consultation and requested the sponsorship of CUIC, the latter organization did "the heavy lifting" in terms of organizing and producing the Consultation. In

addition to opening and closing remarks by representatives of the Disciples of Christ and the Methodist tradition, there were five scholarly papers presented; one by an Episcopalian, two from the Reformed Tradition (PCUSA and UCC) and one each by a member of the ELCA and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. These papers, together with three bible studies By the Rev. John Ford (RC) and other related presentations have been published in *Call to Unity- Resourcing the Church for Ecumenical Ministry*, generously published by the Council on Christianity Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

At its initial meeting in Memphis in January 2001 members of the dialogue present all agreed that both churches were within the “apostolic succession”. Although it might appear that it should have been “easy sledding” from there, the dialogue was still unable to agree on a basis for full mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministry. Disagreements centered on the concepts of “personal” and “corporate” episcopate. Episcopalians believe that a necessary mark of the church is a continuous passage of episcopate through the laying-on-of-hands by bishops in direct, individual succession from apostolic times. Presbyterians, citing a “pre-Ignatian” model, believe that episcopate has been passed on corporately from apostolic times through the laying-on-of-hands within the presbyterate. Of concern to Presbyterians was the feeling that CUIC MRMRM proposal failed to recognize the significance of the presbyterate, which Episcopalians felt that they had done in the United States through the requirement of lay involvement and approval at virtually every level of ecclesiastical governance, albeit their lay people are not ordained as elders.

Mutual recognition and reconciliation seems to rest upon mutual acceptance of the concepts of “personal” and “corporate” episcopate. Until this matter is mutually resolved it will be difficult to move into full altar and pulpit fellowship, the place where mutual ministry between the denominations seems most likely to have an effect at the parish level; the basic level of ministry in both denominations. Because of that the Dialogue had met with collaborating congregations of each denomination and sought to encourage church leaders to initiate and nourish additional relationships of that type; particularly in planting new congregations. Although full mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministry still eluded them, they believed we have found a way in which to encourage preliminary altar and pulpit fellowship and, hence, to allow our congregations of both denominations to commonly pursue the mission and ministry of Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; a reality which we believe already exists in the Mind of God.

To that end, the Episcopal Presbyterian Dialogue requested the respective authorizing bodies the following Agreement (see below) as well as reconstitute the Dialogue for future deliberations. In addition, they recommended that both of our Heads of Communion commit themselves publicly to this effort and, if it seems good to them, that they arrange a public celebration of our progress and our hope for the future.

The Agreement between the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008) and ratified by our presbyteries in 2009. The 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church approved the Agreement in 2009. Both churches authorized another round of dialogue to continue to address theological and missional issues.

As a result of the Dialogue, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Reverend Gradye Parsons, and the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, stood together at the Lord's Table and led the congregation in receiving Holy Communion at the 221st General Assembly (2014).

APPENDIX

Agreement Between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1. We acknowledge one another's churches as churches belonging to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;
2. We acknowledge that in our churches the Word of God is authentically preached and the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are duly administered;
3. We acknowledge one another's ordained ministries as given by God and instruments of grace, and look forward to the time when the reconciliation of our churches makes possible the full interchangeability of ministers;
4. We acknowledge that personal and collegial oversight (episcopate) is embodied and exercised in our churches in a variety of forms, episcopal and non-episcopal, as a visible sign of the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry.
5. We agree that authorized ministers of our churches may, subject to the regulations of the churches and within the limits of their competence,[1] carry out the tasks of their own office in congregations of the other churches when requested and approved by the diocesan bishop and local presbytery;
6. We agree that The Episcopal Church will invite members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to receive Holy Communion in their churches and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will invite members of The Episcopal Church to receive Holy Communion in their churches. We encourage the members of our churches to accept this Eucharistic hospitality and thus express their unity with each other in the one Body of Christ;
7. We agree to continue to dialogue in the areas such as diaconal ministries, historic episcopate, the office of elder, etc. that would lead to full reconciliation of our ministries and interchangeability of our ministers.
8. We encourage diocesan bishops and presbyteries to provide regular occasion for planning, discussing, resourcing for missional, educational and liturgical life together. In addition, to explore possibilities for new church development and redevelopment together.
9. We agree to develop a process to support and implement the above recommendations.[2]
10. We affirm these proposals mark an important step in moving toward the full, visible unity of the Church. We know that beyond this commitment lies a move from the recognition to the reconciliation of churches and ministries within the wider fellowship of the universal Church.

[1] Because we do not yet have reconciliation and full interchangeability of ordained ministries, all authorization for these special opportunities must confirm to the Book of Worship and the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Book of Common Prayer and the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church.

[2] Guidelines will be developed by each of the communions.