

HANDBOOK FOR ECUMENISM



*office of
ecumenical
and interfaith
relations*

That they all may be one. John 17:21

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**For the bishops, diocesan ecumenical officers
and others representing the Episcopal Church
in relations with Churches of other traditions.**

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was intended to promote fresh discussions in light of the failure of church union plans in many parts of the world. The 1985 General Convention asked the Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations to arrange a study of the report and prepare a response. The 1991 General Convention transmitted the Standing Commission's response to the ACC as the official response of the Episcopal Church (Blue Book, 1991, p. 76).

The other North American member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches are: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Hungarian Reformed Church in America, Lithuanian Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, Reformed Church in America, Korean Presbyterian Church in America, and Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Dialogue with the Presbyterian Church, USA

Following the 1999 Plenary of the Consultation on Church Union, the SCER discussed the advisability of engaging in a formal dialogue with the Presbyterian Church USA, particularly focused on the historic episcopate. The SCER agreed to propose this resolution calling for a dialogue authorized by the General Convention. The 2000 General Convention authorized the first formal bilateral dialogue in almost fifty years between the PCUSA and the Episcopal Church. In addition Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), the successor of the Consultation on Church Union, has focused directly on the question of reconciliation of ministries, beginning with its inaugural meeting in January of 2002. The Presbyterian-Episcopal dialogue met for the first time in June 2002, and discussed understandings of baptismal ministry, ordained ministry, and the how the ministry of oversight is expressed in our traditions. The dialogue has continued to meet and provide feedback to the Ministry Task Force of CUIC, and suggested a consultation on the historic episcopate, which was held in October of 2006.

Anglican - Roman Catholic

The Roman Catholic Church is composed of the Latin Rite and the Eastern Rite Churches. In the United States the Western Church is known as the Roman Catholic Church, but nine Eastern Catholic Church jurisdictions also exist here: Armenian, Byelorussian, Chaldean, Melkite, Maronite, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian. Bishops of these Rites, both Western and Eastern, are in communion with the Bishop of Rome and are members of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Relations between the Church of Rome and the Church of England, formally severed in the 16th century, have always persisted, though they were often strained almost to the breaking point, as for instance in 1896 when Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical Apostolicae Curae declared Anglican Orders to be invalid. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York replied to Apostolicae Curae in a Responsio (1897). The Malines Conversations took place between members of the Church of England and Belgian and French Roman Catholics from 1921 to 1925. Pope Pius XI in his encyclical Mortalium Animos (1928) declared unity to be possible only through the absorption of other Christians into the Roman Catholic Church, and forbade Roman Catholics to take part in ecumenical conferences. The 1930 Lambeth Conference Committee on Unity commented: "Complete Absorption' has been proposed to the exclusion of that suggested in the Conversations, as for example, in the paper read at Malines 'L'eglise Anglicane unie, non absorbee.' There are difficulties greater than perhaps were realized in the scheme proposed, but it has the great merit of attempting to recognize to some extent the autonomy which might be possible in a united Church."

A different spirit breathed from Pope Paul VI, whose address in 1970 on the canonization of the Forty English Martyrs included the following: "There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church's humble 'Servant of the servants of God' is able to embrace her ever beloved sister in the one authentic Communion of the family of Christ: a communion of origin and of faith, a communion of priesthood and of rule, a communion of the saints in the freedom of love of the spirit of Jesus."

The pontificate of Pope John XXIII greatly improved the atmosphere for ecumenism. A new era in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations opened in 1960 with the courageous visit of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher of Canterbury to Pope John. Since then the Archbishop of Canterbury has had a permanent representative in Rome, now located at the Anglican Centre in Rome, Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, Piazza del Collegio Romano 2, Int 7, 00186 Roma, Italy.

The Anglican Communion was the first to accept Pope John XXIII's invitation to send Observer-Delegates to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Council's dogmatic constitution De Ecclesia and its decree De Ecumenismo showed the Roman Catholic Church's new attitude to other churches, and an important declaration upholding the principle of religious liberty was also promulgated. The decree De Ecumenismo referred to the Anglican Communion as follows: