



IGLESIA ANGLICANA  
DE SUDAMÉRICA  
CON ALEGRÍA Y SENCILLEZ DE CORAZÓN

## Response of the Anglican Church of South America to the Nairobi–Cairo Proposals and their Supplement

### 1. Introduction

The Anglican Church of South America is grateful for the work undertaken by the *Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order* (IASCUFO) in preparing *The Nairobi–Cairo Proposals* (NCP) and the subsequent *Supplement*. We recognise the care, theological reflection, prayer and ecclesial commitment that have shaped these documents. We also value IASCUFO's willingness to receive responses from different parts of the Communion and to continue the conversation in a spirit of mutual listening and humility. We offer this response in that same spirit.

As a province of the Anglican Communion, we remain deeply committed to the communion of churches that God has gathered through a shared inheritance of faith, liturgy, mission and episcopal order. We continue to believe that the Anglican Communion is a gift to be cared for, strengthened and renewed for the sake of the gospel and for the mission of the Church of Christ in the world. For that reason, our observations do not arise from resistance to change, but from a desire to contribute constructively to discernment about the future of the Communion.

### 2. Reception of the Nairobi–Cairo Proposals

We receive positively various aspects of the Nairobi–Cairo Proposals. We agree that the Anglican Communion must honestly acknowledge the realities of the twenty-first century. The growth and maturity of the provinces of the Global South, the demographic shift within Anglicanism and the increasingly global character of the Communion require serious reflection on structures inherited from previous generations.

We especially value the recognition that the leadership of the Communion must more fully reflect the reality of the Communion itself. We also consider important the awareness expressed in the documents regarding the influence that certain historical and colonial patterns have exercised over our common life, as well as the desire to strengthen collegiality among the Instruments of Communion and to recognise honestly the tensions and wounds present in relationships between provinces.

Likewise, we consider it legitimate and necessary to reflect again on the place and functioning of the See of Canterbury within the life of the Communion. No local church should be understood in a way that diminishes the dignity, responsibility and mutuality of the other churches of the Communion. As the apostle Paul reminds us: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4–5, NRSV). In this sense, we believe that the

proposals represent a serious and valuable effort to respond to real challenges currently facing the Anglican Communion.

### 3. Response to IASCUFO's specific proposals

In addition to the general observations expressed above, we consider it appropriate to respond explicitly to the main proposals contained in The Nairobi–Cairo Proposals and in the subsequent Supplement.

We welcome the proposal to update the description of the Anglican Communion contained in paragraphs 73 to 76 of the NCP and support its possible adoption by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) at its 19th meeting (ACC-19). In particular, we consider that the wording proposed in paragraph 76 represents more adequately the contemporary reality of the Anglican Communion as a communion of autonomous and interdependent churches united by a shared inheritance of faith, mission and common life.

We also support the use of the expression “historic connection with the See of Canterbury” proposed in paragraph 76(c). We consider that this wording appropriately recognises the historical, spiritual and relational importance of Canterbury within the life of the Communion, without making that relationship the sole constitutive criterion of belonging or communion. We understand that this description reflects more accurately the current reality of the Anglican Communion and offers an adequate basis for the future development of its common structures.

We also receive positively the proposals aimed at strengthening the collegial dimension of the First Instrument of Communion. In particular, we support the proposal developed in the Supplement (§16), by which the Archbishop of Canterbury invites the regional primates who form the Primates’ Standing Committee to share collegially in his ministry within the Communion and to explore, over the coming years, more stable forms of cooperation and common discernment.

We do not understand this proposal as a diminution of the particular ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor as an improper transfer of authority to the primates. On the contrary, we consider that it represents a natural development of the collegial dimension of Anglican life and an appropriate response to the increasingly global character of the Communion.

Similarly, we support the proposals intended to strengthen shared leadership and broader representation of the different regions of the Communion within its common structures, as described in the NCP (§§82–85, 94–98) and in the Supplement (§§16–21). We consider that these developments contribute positively to enabling the structures of the Communion to reflect more adequately the reality of the churches that compose it.

Finally, we support the proposal contained in the Supplement (§20) to revise the Constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council in order to remove the office of President of the ACC, currently associated with the Archbishop of Canterbury, while maintaining the Archbishop’s participation as an ex officio member of the ACC and of its Standing Committee. We understand that this modification simplifies the institutional structure of the ACC, clarifies responsibilities, and allows the historic ministry of the

Archbishop of Canterbury to continue to be exercised appropriately within the life of the Communion.

For these reasons, we express our general support for the structural reforms proposed by IASCUFO and encourage ACC-19 to consider them favourably. At the same time, we reiterate our conviction that these reforms, although necessary and valuable, should be understood as part of a broader process that also includes renewed reflection on the doctrinal foundations of Anglican communion.

#### 4. The nature of Communion

At the same time, we believe it necessary to affirm that the central question facing the Anglican Communion today is not, in essence, structural.

Structures are important. The Instruments of Communion are important. Forms of leadership and representation are important as well. However, structures do not create communion. Structures exist to serve a communion that is given by God in Jesus Christ and received by the Church through the apostolic faith.

For that reason, we consider it important to distinguish between the renewal of the structures of the Communion and the renewal of the Communion itself. A more adequate structure cannot, by itself, resolve a weakening of the common faith. A more representative model of leadership likewise cannot automatically restore doctrinal agreement among the provinces. Institutional reform, although necessary, is no substitute for theological clarity.

The New Testament consistently presents the unity of the Church as a reality inseparable from the faith received from the apostles and faithfully transmitted from generation to generation. The Church is called not only to walk together, but also to “make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3, NRSV).

Similarly, the apostle Paul exhorts the Church to stand firm in the teaching received: “Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13, NRSV). That unity, therefore, is not merely relational; it is also doctrinal.

#### 5. The current challenge of Communion

We appreciate the honesty with which the Nairobi–Cairo Proposals acknowledge that the Anglican Communion is currently experiencing forms of differentiated communion. We agree. The Communion is wounded. Relationships between provinces have deteriorated. Trust has been weakened. Some provinces no longer recognise in the same way the teaching and practice of other provinces.

However, we believe it necessary to state clearly that these tensions did not arise primarily because of deficiencies in the structures of the Communion. They arose because provinces have reached profoundly different conclusions regarding matters that affect doctrine, Christian ethics, biblical interpretation, theological anthropology and the moral teaching of the Church.

For this reason, structural reform alone cannot resolve the present situation. The Communion faces not only an institutional challenge, but also a theological one. Many of the structural questions we are now discussing are the consequence of deeper doctrinal disagreements.

At this point, we believe it important to recall that the visible communion of the Church cannot be sustained indefinitely solely on historical, affective or institutional bonds. Christian communion also requires a shared and recognisable faith.

## 6. An important but incomplete contribution

We therefore consider that the Nairobi–Cairo Proposals constitute an important but incomplete contribution to the future of the Communion. They help us to reflect again on the structures through which communion is expressed. They favour a broader and more global representation of leadership. They invite honest recognition of the present realities of our common life. All of this is valuable.

However, the documents do not substantially address the question that today lies at the centre of the life of the Anglican Communion: what is the common faith that holds together the churches of the Communion.

Nor do they propose a process specifically directed towards clarifying, examining and—if God grants it—reconciling the doctrinal differences that currently impair communion between provinces.

We believe that this constitutes the principal limitation of the proposals. The Anglican Communion needs to reflect not only on how to organise its common life, but also on the doctrinal foundations that make that common life possible.

## 7. Communion and truth

The Anglican tradition has always sought to hold together truth and charity, doctrinal fidelity and visible communion, unity and holiness. For this reason, we believe that the Communion must avoid two opposite temptations. The first is to assume that institutional unity, in itself, is sufficient. The second is to abandon altogether the search for the visible unity of the Church.

Neither of these options adequately reflects the will of Christ for his Church.

In John 17, our Lord prays that his disciples may be one. But the New Testament also constantly calls the Church to remain faithful to the apostolic teaching received. Jesus said, in John 15:10, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” On the other hand, in Matthew 7:21 he adds: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

Jude exhorts the Church to “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3, NRSV). It is a matter of obedience or disobedience. The unity of the Church and the truth of the Gospel never appear separated from one another. On the contrary, they belong together. For this reason, differentiated communion may describe a painful present reality, but it should not become the permanent horizon of our

ecclesiology. The vocation of the Church remains a deeper, fuller communion, reconciled in the truth of Christ.

## 8. A proposal for the next stage of common discernment

Consequently, the Anglican Church of South America proposes that the work begun by the Nairobi–Cairo Proposals be accompanied by a second, complementary process. If the current proposals concentrate primarily on the structures of communion, the Anglican Communion should also undertake a process dedicated to reflecting on the doctrinal foundations of that communion.

Such a process could include renewed reflection on the authority of Holy Scripture within Anglican theology; the relationship between Scripture, tradition and reason; the limits and possibilities of legitimate diversity within Anglicanism; the doctrinal foundations of Anglican identity; and those questions that currently impair communion between provinces.

The purpose of a process of this kind should not be coercion or the imposition of one sector of the church upon another. Its purpose should be the patient pursuit of greater theological clarity, deeper mutual understanding and, where possible, renewed doctrinal convergence.

The Anglican Communion has repeatedly demonstrated, throughout its history, a capacity to address complex theological questions with seriousness, depth and fidelity. We believe that the present moment once again requires that effort.

We propose that ACC-19 request IASCUFO to initiate a global consultation on the doctrinal and structural foundations of the Anglican Communion, taking into consideration the Anglican Covenant, the current structures subsequently developed by various provinces and networks of the Communion, and other recent ecclesiological developments. This consultation should present to ACC-20 concrete recommendations regarding the content, methodology and possible mechanisms for strengthening doctrinal communion, mutual accountability and common discernment within the Anglican Communion.

## 9. Conclusion

As the Anglican Province of South America, we receive the Nairobi–Cairo Proposals as a serious and valuable contribution to the future life of the Anglican Communion. We support the continuation of conversations concerning the structures and the Instruments of Communion. We consider those conversations necessary and timely.

At the same time, we encourage the Communion not to regard structural reform as the culmination of its task. The deeper question remains before us: how the churches of the Anglican Communion will bear common and faithful witness to the apostolic faith in our generation.

The future of the Communion will finally depend not only on the way in which its structures are organised, but also on the faithfulness with which its churches receive, proclaim and live the Gospel entrusted to them.

For this reason, we commit ourselves to continuing to pray and work for the unity of the Church, trusting in the promise of Christ, who is the head of the Church and who alone can lead his people into the fullness of truth and communion.

“But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15, NRSV).

May God grant the Anglican Communion wisdom, humility, faithfulness and peace as it seeks to discern the way forward.