

Growth in Communion, Partnership in Mission

Report from the Church of England – Church of Scotland Joint Study Group

PREFACE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

1. The relationship between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland has roots reaching deep into our shared past and connecting us across borders that are at once geographical, theological and cultural. Our continuing parallel roles as the churches ‘of’ our two nations give us plenty of common ground in the present. Partnership between us is strong and multi-faceted, based on the common call of Christ to share in a common mission.
2. Given that background – set out in Chapter I of this report, ‘Common Mission and Common Context’ – why should we need the formal agreement of the Columba Declaration contained in its final chapter? The answer to that question is summarised at paragraph 14. Our hope is that joint affirmation by our two churches of the Columba Declaration would:
 - ‘Affirm and strengthen our relationship at a time when it is likely to be particularly critical in the life of the United Kingdom;
 - ‘Provide an effective framework for coordinating present partnership activities and for fostering new initiatives;
 - ‘Enable us to speak and act together more effectively in the face of the missionary challenges of our generation.’
3. Each of these points is important. Together, they include concern for the social and political well-being of all the communities we serve, concern for ensuring that collaboration between our churches remains effective, well-coordinated and creative, and concern for developing our capacity for joint initiatives in a situation where the scale of the missionary task underlines the foolishness of trying to face it entirely alone.
4. Chapter III of the report, ‘Growing in Partnership for Mission’, sets out four areas for future work that could be opened up by the Columba Declaration: sharing across our borders; mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries; nation, country, government and church; and mission and ecclesiology. Much has been done, much is being done – but there is also so much more that could be done
5. All of this rests on the careful articulation of common theological ground set out in Chapter II, ‘Establishing Shared Foundations: Agreement in Faith’. This is not a matter of wading into uncharted ecumenical waters. As the report explains, both the content of this chapter and the Columba Declaration itself are closely modelled on existing ecumenical agreements, including the *Reilly Common Statement* between the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland and the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches.

6. We believe that approval of the Columba Declaration by our two churches will represent a significant step in the long history of their relationship, one that affirms the place we have come to and opens up new possibilities for the future. The new arrangements we are proposing are modest and ‘light touch’: a small contact group meeting yearly and reporting to the ecumenical bodies within each church. The new possibilities that energise us are not about novel doctrinal statements or additional institutional structures, but about growing in communion and partnership in mission, so that people may be drawn to the good news of peace, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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CHAPTER I

Common Mission and Common Context

a) Common Calling

1. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ calls his Church, empowered by the Spirit, in every time and place to bear witness to the gospel of his Son, but that one Church is always called in a particular geographical and historical context. The Church of England and the Church of Scotland are called principally to mission within different national spheres – but also called in the shared context of the historical, political and geographical reality of the United Kingdom.¹ That diversity and unity of context has a particular significance at this time in our history in the wake of the Referendum of 2014 and the General Election result of 2015. It is too early to say what the long term impact of recent events will be for our nations, but they give focus to our shared and overlapping mission and the need to bear prophetic witness to our unity in Christ that must always transcend any national identities.

b) Common Context: A Shared Space

2. Responses to the Referendum of 2014 and to the General Election of 2015 will take some time to unfold. It is possible that they could lead to the consideration of changes to constitutional arrangements that would in time affect the residents of England as well as Scotland.² They are likely also to be implicated in wider debates about national identity and appropriate forms of independence, including the debate about the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. Whatever the outcome of these debates, we may anticipate that the Church of Jesus Christ within the shared space of the United Kingdom will wish to reflect upon those consequences and to articulate our shared faith in terms which engage our fellow citizens. While this report is intended to contribute to that, the distinctive relationships, past and present, which have obtained for us between church, government and society place a particular responsibility upon our two churches in this respect.
3. There is then a particular social and political situation within which this report has been written and in which it will initially be read. It is important however to affirm that the process shaping it was not triggered by these events and associated concerns. Rather, our shared purpose in offering this report flows from our concern to affirm that, together with other churches within the United Kingdom, we participate in a common mission, in all its varied and ever changing contexts, and to respond to the specific context that faces us in mission today. What unites us as churches immeasurably transcends the boundaries of our two particular nations and reminds us of the imperative of responding to the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ that we 'may all be one' (John 17:21).

¹ For the sake of clarity and consistency, this report refers throughout to England and Scotland as 'nations' and to the United Kingdom as a 'country'. This use of terminology is not intended to convey any particular perspective or point of view on debates regarding Scottish independence.

² See on this subject the findings of the McKay Commission, UK Government, *Report of the Commission on the Consequences of Devolution for the House of Commons* (London: UK Government, 2013).

c) Common History: A Shared Journey

4. Our common context is shaped by a common history.³ The history of Christianity in Britain is one in which border crossings between what are now Scotland and England have played a significant role for many centuries. Partnership and mutual exchange in mission are already evident in the time of Columba, for instance. Scotland and England experienced contrasting but intersecting responses to the European Reformations in the sixteenth century. These had a decisive effect on the political upheavals of the seventeenth century and the new constitutional framework put in place in the eighteenth. In the nineteenth century, Queen Victoria's decision to receive the sacrament at Crathie Church while at Balmoral symbolized the distinctive relationship to the monarch of both churches, as well as the shared responsibilities of these churches for the country she governed.⁴
5. It should therefore be no surprise that when the wind of the twentieth-century ecumenical movement began to be felt, the two churches considered where it might be leading them. The Church of Scotland had already in 1922 noted its 'duty as a Church of Christ to give sympathetic and serious consideration to the responsible proposals' in the *Lambeth Appeal to All Christian People* of 1920,⁵ and in the early 1930s there was 'free and unrestricted conference' (as it was expressed at the time) between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland.⁶ After the Second World War (1939-1945), the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland gave consideration to a call by the Archbishop of Canterbury for a renewed effort to achieve unity,⁷ and a further series of conferences between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland was convened from 1950-1953. These conversations essentially affirmed the position reached in 1934 and agreed that future conversations should continue with the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church of England becoming full participants.
6. Quadrilateral conversations then took place between the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church of England between 1954 and 1957. The report of these conversations was published as *Relations between Anglican and Presbyterian Churches*.⁸ The proposals contained therein did not finally commend themselves to the Church of Scotland,⁹ albeit that it was agreed that a further series of conversations be initiated. These took place between 1962 and 1966, and the report was published in *The Anglican-Presbyterian Conversations*.¹⁰ The reception of this latter report may be said to mark the end of the sustained attempt to move towards unity that had been initiated in 1932,¹¹ with both churches turning in the later 1960s towards ecumenical conversations about union principally within their national contexts.

³ For a fuller treatment of this, see *Our Fellowship in the Gospel: Reports to the General Assembly* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2010), chapter 2, 'Who Are we? Introducing our Churches to Each Other.'

⁴ Owen Chadwick, 'The sacrament at Crathie 1873', in Stewart J Brown and George Newlands, eds., *Scottish Christianity in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark International, 2001), 177.

⁵ G.K.A. Bell (ed.), *Documents on Christian Unity 1920-1924* (Oxford: OUP, 1924), 178-179.

⁶ *Reports to General Assembly* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 1932), 844-846; G.K.A. Bell (ed.), *Documents on Christian Unity 1930-1948* (Oxford: OUP, 1948), 123-132.

⁷ *Reports to General Assembly Reports* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 1947), 48-51.

⁸ *Relations between Anglican and Presbyterian Churches* (London: SPCK, 1957).

⁹ *Reports to the General Assembly* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 1959), 68-80.

¹⁰ *The Anglican-Presbyterian Conversations* (Edinburgh & London: Saint Andrew Press & SPCK, 1966).

¹¹ I. Henderson, *Power without Glory* (London: Hutchinson, 1967).

7. At the same time, however, both Churches were also participating in emerging international dialogues, including that between the Anglican Communion and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. This led to the setting up of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission, which in 1984 produced the influential report, *God's Reign and Our Unity*.¹² It embodies a rich resource for continued engagement between representatives of the Anglican and Reformed traditions such as the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. With reference to the separation between churches within the Anglican and Reformed traditions, the report affirms:

The reason why we can never rest content in our separation is the unlimited grace of God the Father, who has accepted us in the beloved Son and bound us together in his own life by the power of the Holy Spirit – a life in which we are called to reflect both the unity and diversity of the Godhead. If we then refuse to accept one another in Christ we flout the grace by which he has accepted us and by which we live. (s.25)¹³

d) Common Mission: A Shared Calling

8. Perhaps it was something of that discontent that led to renewed 'faith and order' conversations between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland at the start of the third millennium. Those conversations led to the publication of a report by the Joint Study Group in 2010, *Our Fellowship in the Gospel*, which received careful attention at both the Church of England's General Synod and the Church of Scotland's General Assembly.¹⁴
9. One of the principal themes within *Our Fellowship in the Gospel* is that of our "Partnership in the Gospel" which sought to establish a basis for our shared work in our 'koinonia in the gospel' (Philippians 1:5). It states:

One aspect of the idea which is particularly useful for ecumenical thinking today ... is its embodiment of the crossing of boundaries ... This practical crossing of boundaries, in the creation of active partnerships between worshipping communities, may be of particular significance to the relationship between our two churches as we seek to build a new partnership in mission across the Border.

10. An important question for relations between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland has been: is there a particular 'partnership in the gospel' that pertains to our two churches specifically within the context of the United Kingdom? Our primary partners have often been the other churches within our respective nations, and, as noted above, one of the factors in the drawing back from formal dialogue in the 1960s was a sense that these relationships needed to take priority. There has also been a related question as to

¹² *God's Reign and Our Unity* (Edinburgh & London: Saint Andrew Press & SPCK, 1984), the report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission appointed by the Anglican Consultative Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches which met, following a preliminary meeting in 1978, between 1981 and 1984.

¹³ *God's Reign and Our Unity*, 16.

¹⁴ *Our Fellowship in the Gospel: Summary Report of a Joint Study Group between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland* (GS 1792) (London: General Synod, 2010); *Reports to the General Assembly* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2010), 6.3/14-6.3/19. For subsequent reporting within the Church of Scotland, see; *Ibid.*, (2011), 7.3/6; *Ibid.*, (2012), 7.3/8; *Ibid.*, (2013), 7.3/9 & *Ibid.*, (2014), 7.3/8.

how far the Church of England and the Church of Scotland can speak to one another as an Anglican church and a Reformed church without drawing into the conversation their 'local' Reformed and Anglican partners. Consequently, *Our Fellowship in the Gospel* recommended that the next phase of conversations be a three-way exercise that fully included the Scottish Episcopal Church. There might also have been a case for involving the United Reformed Church as another representative of the Reformed tradition in England and in Scotland.

11. There is clearly a need for any development in the relationship between our two churches to proceed through an open and careful process of consultation with our ecumenical partners in each of our nations. Within that process, particular attention needs to be given to the Scottish Episcopal Church (whose observer has been involved in all the meetings leading up to this report) and to the United Reformed Church. Their responses to the proposals set out in this report will be of great importance. There is however a distinctive partnership in the gospel to which our two Churches are called within the United Kingdom, rooted in our shared history and in our parallel and overlapping roles as the churches of our respective nations, as sketched out in paragraphs 2-3 above. Therefore it seems appropriate to ask the question: how might this particular partnership be strengthened at this specific juncture in the history of the United Kingdom?

e) Formal agreement, mutual recognition and fellowship in the gospel

12. In the course of the consultations which gave rise to this report, it was often observed that a potentially anomalous feature of the relationship between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland is the absence of any formal recognition of each other. Might such recognition strengthen our partnership in response to the common calling to mission with which we began this report, across our shared border? That is the key question that lies behind this report. Its proposals rest upon an affirmative answer.
13. It is important to observe that the stalling of the formal process of seeking unity from the late 1960s and the lack of the kind of formal, mutual recognition that the Church of England has established through the Meissen, Porvoo, Fetter Lane and Reuilly agreements¹⁵ has not prevented practical collaboration and exchange between our two churches. There is a rich tapestry of activity here, including:
 - The appointment of a senior representative from each Church to coordinate the relationship (one of the key recommendations of *Our Fellowship in the Gospel*);
 - The regular appointment of a Church of Scotland representative to the Church of England's General Synod, and of a Church of England representative to the General Assembly;
 - The inclusion of a visit to the Archbishop of Canterbury during the annual St Andrew's-tide visit of the Moderator of the General Assembly to London;

¹⁵ For a general summary of the ecumenical agreements entered into by the Church of England, see M. Davie, *A Guide to the Church of England* (London: Mowbray, 2008), 168-192, and for a reflection on the significance of those agreements, see P. Fisher, 'Symphonic Discord: The Place of Diversity in Unity Statements', in P. Avis (ed.), *Paths to Unity: Explorations in Ecumenical Method* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), 13-28.

- The biennial bilateral and cross-disciplinary consultation co-chaired for the Church of England by the Archbishop of York;
- Partnership in initiating and supporting the Churches' Mutual Credit Union, launched in 2015;
- Regular exchanges between the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council and the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council on matters of common interest and concern;
- Drawing on one another's resources, as for instance in the use of a recent report for the Church of Scotland General Assembly in the Church of England publication, *Grace and Disagreement*, as both churches have responded to the legislation enabling same-sex marriage;¹⁶
- Contact between the Church of Scotland's Ministries Council and the Church of England's Ministry Council, as for instance in the area of Fresh Expressions (as directed by the 2014 General Assembly);
- The designation of the Church of Scotland under the Church of England's Ecumenical Relations Measure in 2014, which opens up many new possibilities for sharing in ministry and mission at local level;
- The Faith and Order Conversations that were set up following the reception of *Our Fellowship in the Gospel* and which have led to this report.

14. Our belief is that a formal declaration of mutual recognition by our two churches and public commitment to sharing in mission, as proposed in this report, would:

- Affirm and strengthen our relationship at a time when it is likely to be particularly critical in the life of the United Kingdom;
- Provide an effective framework for coordinating present partnership activities and for fostering new initiatives;
- Enable us to speak and act together more effectively in the face of the missionary challenges of our generation.

15. In entering into such a formal declaration, the Church of England can draw on several significant precedents for formal agreements with other churches. These include: the *Meissen Agreement* with the Protestant Church in Germany (1991),¹⁷ and, with the other British and Irish Anglican churches, the *Porvoo Common Statement* with Nordic and

¹⁶ The Church of England, *Grace and Disagreement: Shared Conversations on Scripture, Mission and Human Sexuality*, vol. 2, *A Reader: Writings to Resource Conversation* (London: Church House Publishing, 2014), 72-87.

¹⁷ *The Meissen Agreement: Texts* (London: Council for Christian Unity, 1992). For current information about relations under the agreement, see: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/work-other-churches/europe/the-meissen-agreement.aspx>

Baltic Lutheran churches (1993),¹⁸ and the *Reuilly Common Statement* (2001).¹⁹ This report has consciously sought to work in continuity with them in order to maintain a consistency with that which had already been agreed between Anglican and Lutherans and Reformed elsewhere in Europe.²⁰

16. The set of declarations and commitments that we invite our two churches to make is set out in the fourth and final chapter of this report. The second chapter sets out our shared foundations of faith, which is the basis for our recognition of one another as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The third chapter outlines our partnership in the gospel and how we believe it can be strengthened. We believe that these two chapters show why the steps proposed in the final chapter are both fully justified and profoundly significant for our growth as churches together in God's mission on this island.

¹⁸ *Together in Mission and Ministry: The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe* (GS 1083) (London: Church House Publishing, 1993). For current information about the Porvoo Communion of Churches, see <http://www.porvoocommunion.org>.

¹⁹ *Called to Witness and Service: The Reuilly Common Statement with Essays on Church, Eucharist and Ministry* (GS 1329) (London: Church House Publishing, 1999).

²⁰ For this reason, references in the following chapters to ecumenical reports are generally to those that pertain to relations between Anglican, Reformed and Lutheran churches, rather than to e.g. Anglican – Roman Catholic dialogue.

CHAPTER II

Establishing Shared Foundations: Agreement in Faith

17. The mutual declarations and commitments that we propose be made by our churches need to rest on confidence that we share agreement in faith. A formal, public commitment to partnership in the gospel requires assurance that our understanding of the gospel is held in common. That does not require us to agree on everything – both our churches are long accustomed to accommodating a significant diversity of theological perspective within their own life – but it does mean that such agreement in faith should be set out for review as part of the preparation for entering into a mutual agreement. That is the purpose of this chapter.
18. In doing this, we draw on the agreed statements between representatives of the churches of the Anglican Communion and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (paragraph 7 above), between the Church of England and Reformed and Lutheran Churches in Continental Europe (paragraph 15 above) and between the Protestant Churches of Europe through the Leuenberg Agreement (1973) and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, of which the Church of Scotland is a full participant. Alongside these agreed statements must also be set work of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, in particular *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*, and *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, and the reports of the Anglican and Reformed dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. The agreement in faith set out below rests on these significant texts, and draws particularly on the *Reuilly Common Statement*.²¹
- a) We accept the authority of the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We read the Scriptures in the course of public worship. We believe that through the gospel, God offers eternal life to all humanity and that the Scriptures contain everything necessary to salvation.²²
- b) We accept the Nicene and the Apostles' Creeds and confess the trinitarian and christological dogmas to which the early Councils of the Church testify. That is, we believe that Jesus of Nazareth is true God and true Man, as set out in the formula of the Council of Chalcedon, and that God is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²³ This faith of the Church through the ages is borne witness to in the historic formularies of our churches: for the Church of England, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (1571), The Book of Common Prayer (1662) and the Ordinal (1662); for the Church of Scotland, Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland (1926), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), which is the principal subordinate standard of faith, and the Basis of Union (1929). This faith has to be proclaimed afresh in every generation.
- c) We believe and proclaim the gospel that in Jesus Christ God loves and redeems the world. We are thankful for the renewed understanding of the gospel of salvation that was engendered by the sixteenth-century Reformations (paragraph 4 above). We 'share a common understanding of God's justifying grace, i.e. that we are accounted

²¹ *Called to Witness and Service: The Reuilly Common Statement with Essays on Church, Eucharist and Ministry* (GS 1329) (London: Church House Publishing, 1999), 25-29.

²² Cf. *Porvoo*, para. 32 (a) and *Leuenberg*, para 13.

²³ *Meissen*, para 15(ii); cf. *Leuenberg*, para 12.

righteous and are made righteous before God only by grace through faith because of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not on account of our works or merit... Both our traditions affirm that justification leads and must lead to “good works”; authentic faith issues in love.²⁴ We receive the Holy Spirit who renews our hearts and equips us for service and calls us to good works. As justification and sanctification are aspects of the same divine act, so also living faith and love are inseparable in the believer.²⁵

- d) We believe that the Church is constituted and sustained by the Triune God. We believe that the Church is sent into the world as sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God.²⁶ The Church is a divine reality, holy and transcending present finite reality. At the same time, being also a human institution, it shares all the ambiguity and frailty of the human condition, and is always called to repentance, reform and renewal.²⁷
- (e) We believe that the Church is called to the worship of God in Spirit and in truth. Our common commitment to the declaration of God’s saving word in our worship has contributed to overlapping traditions of the reading of Scripture and a rich biblical spirituality expressed in a number of common prayers, canticles, hymns and metrical psalms.
- (f) We believe that through baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God unites the one baptized with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, initiates into the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and confers the gracious gift of new life in the Spirit.²⁸ By the power of the Holy Spirit Christ calls the baptized to a new life of faith, to daily repentance, and discipleship.²⁹ We adhere to the practice of baptism as set out in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*: ‘[b]oth the baptism of believers and the baptism of infants take place in the Church as the community of faith. When one who can answer for himself or herself is baptised, a personal confession of faith will be an integral part of the baptismal service. When an infant is baptised, the personal response will be offered at a moment in life ... and Christian nurture is directed to the eliciting of this confession.’³⁰ Confirmation is the normative context within which such confession is publicly made and affirmed in our churches.
- (g) We believe that the celebration of the Holy Communion, also known as the Lord’s Supper, is the feast of the new covenant instituted by Jesus Christ, in which the word

²⁴ *Meissen* para.15 cf. *Leuenberg* paras 7, 9 and 10.

²⁵ *Porvoo*, para 32 (c); cf. *Leuenberg*, para 10.

²⁶ *Meissen*, para 15 (vii); cf. *GROU*, paras 29-34 and *The Church of Jesus Christ: The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity*, Chapter I, section 1.

²⁷ *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, paras 33-36.

²⁸ Cf. *Meissen*, para 15 (iv) and *GROU*, paras 47-61.

²⁹ Article XXV of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion affirms that baptism, together with the Lord’s Supper, are ‘Sacraments ordained of Christ ... not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession, but ... sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace ... by the which [God] doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.’ The Westminster Confession affirms: ‘Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life’ (Ch. XXVIII, I).

³⁰ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, para 12.

of God is proclaimed and in which Christ crucified and risen gives his body and blood to the community under the visible signs of bread and wine.³¹ ‘In the action of the Eucharist Christ is truly present to share his risen life with us and to unite us with himself in his self-offering to the Father, the one full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice which he alone can offer and has offered once for all.’³² In this celebration we experience the love of God and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ and proclaim his death and resurrection until he comes again and brings his kingdom to completion.³³ Holy Communion is no mere calling to mind of a past event or of its significance, but the Church’s effectual proclamation of God’s mighty acts.³⁴ Celebrating Holy Communion, the Church is nourished, strengthened in faith and hope, and sent out for witness and service in daily life. Here we already have a foretaste of the eternal joy of God’s kingdom.

- (h) We believe that apostolicity belongs to the whole Church. The apostolicity of the Church, as fidelity to the apostolic teaching and mission, is manifested in a *successio fidelium* (‘succession of the faithful /community of faith’) through the ages. All members of the Church are called to participate in its apostolic mission.³⁵ They are therefore given various gifts for ministry by the Holy Spirit.³⁶ They are called to offer themselves as a ‘living sacrifice’ and to intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world.³⁷ This is the corporate priesthood of the whole people of God, called to ministry and service (1 Peter 2.5).
- (i) Within the apostolicity of the whole Church is an apostolic succession of the ministry which serves, and is a focus of, the continuity of the Church in its life in Christ and its faithfulness to the words and acts of Jesus transmitted by the apostles. The ordained ministry has a particular responsibility for witnessing to this apostolic tradition and for proclaiming it afresh with authority in every generation. Within the community of the Church ordained ministries exist to serve the ministry of the whole people of God. For that purpose, the ordained ministry of word and sacraments is a gift of God to the Church.³⁸
- (j) We believe that a ministry of oversight (*episcopate*), exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways, at all levels of the Church’s life, is necessary to witness to and safeguard the unity and apostolicity of the Church. This ministry of oversight, whether exercised in personal, collegial or communal ways, is a participation in the servant ministry of Christ.³⁹ In such oversight, authority should be characterized by service to the whole body, even in the context of discipline. *Episkope* after the manner of Christ calls for courageous discerning and self-giving love. It requires openness to the Spirit of truth and the radical values of God’s kingdom, against which every exercise of power must be measured. It involves leadership by example. Its purpose is not domination of the people of God but an effective opening-up of the implications

³¹ Cf. *Meissen*, para 15 (v) and *Leuenberg*, para 15.

³² *God’s Reign and Our Unity* p 41.

³³ *Meissen*, para. 15 (v); cf. *BEM, Eucharist*, para 1 and *Leuenberg*, para 16.

³⁴ *Porvoo*, para 32 (h); cf. *GROU*, para 65.

³⁵ *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, paras 23 and 25.

³⁶ *Meissen*, para 15 (viii); cf. *Leuenberg*, para. 13.

³⁷ Cf. *Porvoo*, para 32 (i) and *BEM*, para 17.

³⁸ Cf. *Meissen*, para 15 (viii); *GROU*, paras 73-7 and 91-7; *BEM, Ministry*, paras 41-4 and *The Church of Jesus Christ*, Chapter I, para. 2.5.1.2.

³⁹ Cf. *Meissen*, para 15 (ix) and 16, *BEM, Ministry*, paras 23 and 26 and *GROU*, para 72.

of life in Christ for the Church and the world. (cf. Mark 10.42-5, John 13.1-17, 2 Corinthians 1.24, Philippians 2.1-11, 1 Peter 5.1-5).

(k) We share a common hope in the final consummation of the kingdom of God, and believe that in this eschatological perspective we are called to engage now in mission and to work for the furtherance of justice and peace. The obligations of the kingdom are to govern our life in the Church and our concern for the world.⁴⁰ In this way the Church witnesses to the new humanity that has its origin and fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

19. This summary of what we believe witnesses to the extent of our common faith. We believe it provides a sound basis for entering into the formal agreement between our churches proposed in this report and for informing our future work together.

⁴⁰ *Meissen*, para 15 (x); cf. *GROU*, paras 18 and 43, *Leuenberg*, para 9, and *The Church of Jesus Christ*, Chapter I, para 3.3.4.

CHAPTER III

Growing in Partnership for Mission

20. Given the particular context for our relationship sketched out in chapter I, and the fundamental agreement in faith established in chapter II, how might the Church of England and the Church of Scotland grow closer together to express more fully the communion we have in Christ, that this country and its nations may believe in him? In this chapter, we set out four key areas for future work: sharing across our borders; mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries; nation, country, government and church; and mission and ecclesiology. Finally, we propose setting up a contact group to coordinate the different activities that arise from our developing relationship.

a) Sharing across our borders

21. As noted in chapter I, our primary partners in local mission will remain the other churches within our respective nations. Nonetheless, we believe that there are particular opportunities for sharing in the gospel across our borders. This section briefly reviews three of these: the movement of members, the sharing of ministers and congregational partnership. It does so in the light of the new opportunities that have opened up on the side of the Church of England following the designation of the Church of Scotland under the Ecumenical Relations Measure (ERM) in 2014.

22. There is regular movement of people across the border between Scotland and England, including people who were resident in one becoming resident in the other, perhaps for a short time, perhaps for a life time. What happens when someone making that transition is a member of one of our churches? We recognise that church ‘membership’ is a complex and indeed to some extent contested notion for both of us as churches ‘of’ our respective nations, but that may be one reason why those formed in one of them might feel a particular kind of affinity in the other, even though liturgical and theological affinity might be found more reliably for members of the Church of Scotland in the United Reformed Church and for members of the Church of England in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

23. We have absolutely no desire to discourage Anglicans who move across our shared border from joining Episcopalian congregations, or Reformed Christians from joining Reformed congregations. Indeed, we rejoice that the ecumenical movement has helped to bring us to a place where we have no hesitation in recognizing those baptized in one another’s churches as baptised in the one Lord Jesus Christ and are able to welcome one another’s communicants to the one table of the Lord’s Supper. Our concern is rather to ask: what might be the issues for someone who would like to explore crossing that particular ecclesial border when they cross the geographical one? What are the formal obstacles to ‘membership’ in terms of the practices of our two churches, not least with regard to confirmation? What kind of processes are necessary to take up office, and to participate in governance e.g. by voting at meetings? And what are the cultural challenges that might need to be negotiated without necessarily being immediately apparent? We believe that careful consideration of these questions could help both our churches to welcome those who decide to cross these borders and to enable them to share in God’s mission in their new context as full partners in the gospel.

24. The sharing of authorised ministers arises from the same context of people switching residence between Scotland and England but raises some more sharply defined issues. There have been significant restrictions here. Currently, it is possible for someone ordained in another church tradition to serve in the Church of Scotland while remaining a minister of their own tradition, for a limited time and under supervision.
25. Until recently, there has been no formal procedure for Church of Scotland ministers to assist in public worship within the Church of England, but the designation of the Church of Scotland under the Ecumenical Relations Measure (ERM) changes that. If the requisite permissions are obtained, a Minister of the Church of Scotland would, on the basis of Canon B43, be able either occasionally or regularly: to preach; to lead Services of the Word; to share in presiding at joint services (including joint eucharistic services); to take funerals (with the family's permission); and to assist with baptisms and weddings (but not officiate).
26. We are also aware, however, that this remains a good distance from the full interchangeability of ordained ministries that many in our churches would like to see and that could bring a welcome new dimension to our partnership in the gospel. Interchangeability, however, rests on the mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries, to which we turn in the next section. Here, however, we would note that there is scope for work in exploring the framework within current arrangements for sharing in authorised ministries – lay as well as ordained – and in making sure information about that is clearly communicated to ministers within both Churches, both those who may be crossing borders and those who may be receiving them.
27. Finally, in this section, we would like to mention the scope for congregational partnership where the borders have already been crossed and we share geographical space. We have two primary contexts in mind here. One is the small number of Church of Scotland congregations within England. The other is the case of chaplaincies relating to both churches located in the same towns and cities in mainland Europe. In these contexts, the new situation brought about by designation under the ERM means that from the Church of England's perspective, the provisions of Canon B43 set out possibilities for sharing in ministry and mission, including a legal framework for Church of England clergy to participate as clergy in Church of Scotland services, subject to the regulations of the Church of Scotland. It also means that Church of England and Church of Scotland congregations would be free to explore the possibilities of developing an LEP arrangement, which would open the way for a more integral sharing of ministries under the provisions of Canon B44. Are there any cases where this might be beneficial, especially once the current review of arrangements for LEPs being undertaken by Churches Together in England has been completed, which aims to make formal partnership at local level simpler and more flexible?

b) Mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries

28. In the ecumenical agreements referred to in chapter 1, paragraphs 15 and 18 above, there was an expectation that the kind of mutual recognition of one another as churches that is taken up in this document could and should lead in due course to the mutual recognition of ministries, which would then form the basis for the interchangeability of ordained ministries between churches as an expression of visible unity. While this was a hope for the Meissen and Reuilly agreements, it was actually achieved within the Porvoo agreement.

29. We share the hope for a unity between us that would take down the barriers preventing ministers of one Church contributing as ministers in the other. Nonetheless, we recognize that the obstacles here are significant and will not be easily overcome. They relate in part to differences in how our churches believe that the apostolicity of the Church, on which we share fundamental agreement, should be lived out with regard to practices of *episcopate*, where, again, we share substantial agreement.
30. The Church of England believes that the historic episcopate is a sign of the apostolicity of the whole Church. The ordination of a bishop in historic succession (that is, in intended continuity with the apostles themselves) is a sign of God's promise to be with the Church, and the way the Church communicates its care for continuity in the whole of its faith, life and mission, and renews its intention and determination to manifest the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles. The Church of England recognizes that a continuity in apostolic faith, worship and mission has been preserved in churches which have not retained the historic episcopal succession.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the Church of England, like other churches of the Anglican Communion, is committed to maintaining the sign of historic succession and to sharing in it as an essential step towards full visible unity.
31. The Church of Scotland also believes that its ministries are in apostolic succession, without needing to include the episcopal order nor to express that succession through it. In its ordination rites it emphasizes the continuity of the Church and its ministry. It can recognize in the historic episcopal succession maintained by other churches a sign of the apostolicity of the Church. It does not, however, regard it as important for the *bene esse* ('well-being') of the Church in the same way as the Church of England, and therefore while respecting its perspective does not share from its own side the significance for the Church of England of this issue in seeking to grow together.
32. The Church of England has recently entered into a significant process of working on proposals for the interchangeability of ministries with the Methodist Church, to which it is joined in a covenant partnership. It may be that what emerges from these discussions – which will also need to take account of developments in Anglican-Methodist relations elsewhere in Britain and Ireland and across the world – will provide new models for thinking about how episcopally and non-episcopally ordered churches can move towards a greater, mutual recognition of ministries. In the meantime, there may also be scope for setting out more fully the current practices and understandings of *episcopate* on both sides.

c) Nation, country, government and church

33. As set out in the first chapter (paragraphs 1-3 above), as the outcome of the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 is absorbed, significant public debate continues on what it means for England as well as Scotland, including issues of subsidiarity, with complex cross currents generated by the wider context of contemporary politics. As two national churches with constitutional status within the current arrangements of the United Kingdom, we share a common responsibility for fostering inclusive and constructive discussion that attends to a broad range of issues. We have a common concern that in the course of the debate, the relationship of nation, country and government to recognised national churches as well as the wider plurality of churches and faiths should receive

⁴¹ The Church of England's position here is set out in *Porvoo Common Statement*, 51-52.

proper attention. We face the common reality that constitutional change could have a significant impact on our own identity and relationships.

34. We therefore recommend that one or more specific projects in relation to these emerging issues be identified as a key element in the next phase of our partnership in the gospel. It might, for instance, focus on the theology of nationhood, which has been the subject of some creative attention in political theology in recent years. It might deal more directly with specific proposals for constitutional change that are being debated in the public arena. Or indeed it might try to address both of these and make appropriate connections between them. Behind much of the political discourse is a concern for and perhaps anxiety about identity that certainly calls for theological reflection but may also serve as a potentially uncomfortable mirror for the way that churches too can respond to perceived external threats by seeking to strengthen their assertion of internal identity.
35. Serious work in this area will need to bring together people and expertise from both the 'faith and order' and 'mission and public affairs' spheres of our two churches if it is to be effective. There will also be a question about the extent to which such work should engage other partners, including those in university posts who have particular interests and expertise, from philosophy and political science departments as well as theology. This is not the place to make detailed prescriptions for future work, but our sense would be that our churches are in a good position to identify areas for attention and shape the process for addressing them, drawing others into that as appropriate.

d) Mission and ecclesiology

36. Underpinning all of these areas are theological issues around the interrelation of mission and ecclesiology: how sharing in God's mission shapes the Church, and how the life of the Church is itself an articulation of the gospel in the world. Sharing across our borders will require us to reflect on how we think about the church and how the church responds to the imperatives of mission. Long-standing questions about mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries draw us back to the issue of why the church needs designated 'ministers', how to differentiate between such ministers and what is fixed and what is negotiable in terms of our understanding here. Similarly, what is the right way to present the relationship between church and nation – what kinds of authority, accountability and loyalty are appropriate here? To what extent does a shared sense of mission to the nation foster in both our churches an ecclesiology that seeks in distinctive ways to be generous in its accommodation of plurality and disagreement? How might secularisation and church decline on the one hand, and apparently intractable disagreements within our churches on the other, be testing and challenging that ecclesiology? One way to address these issues might be for a group to be set up to look at both the WCC's Mission Statement (*Together Towards Life*), and the Faith & Order consensus document (*The Church: Towards a Common Vision*), with an eye to how they might inform a shared theological framework about church and mission that can inform the various different ways in which we relate to one another as two churches within a particular context that is recognised in law.

e) Setting up a contact group

37. In the first chapter, we set out some of the main strands in our current partnership (paragraph 13 above). Each is important in its own right. We believe it would however significantly strengthen the partnership if these different strands could be more effectively

coordinated. Similarly, there is a need for some careful thought about how to move forward with the four areas identified above for growing in partnership for mission. We do not wish to miss important opportunities, but there will also need to be some decisions made, consciously or by default, as to what we prioritise and what we postpone. We believe it would be better done consciously, and the decision making process led by a body with proper authority and accountability.

38. We therefore propose that a 'contact group' be set up, with the designated senior representatives from each church as Co-Chairs, to coordinate, initiate and promote activities that can strengthen our partnership in mission. The contact group should include between two and four further members from each church. It would be important that its membership facilitates effective communication with and between the different strands of our relationship. We would suggest that it meets at least annually in the first instance, reporting to the Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the Church of Scotland and to the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England.

CHAPTER IV

The Columba Declaration

39. In the light of our common mission and context (chapter 1), our agreement in faith (chapter 2) and our significant opportunities for growing in partnership in mission (chapter 3), we recommend that our churches make the following Declaration.

We, the Church of Scotland and the Church of England, make the following acknowledgements and commitments, which are interrelated.

a) Acknowledgements

- i. We acknowledge one another's churches as churches belonging to the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the apostolic ministry and mission of the whole people of God.
- ii. We acknowledge that in both our churches the word of God is truly preached, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion are rightly administered.
- iii. We acknowledge that both our churches share in the common confession of the apostolic faith.
- iv. We acknowledge that one another's ordained ministries of word and sacraments are given by God as instruments of grace and we look forward to a time when growth in communion can be expressed in fuller unity that makes possible the interchangeability of ministers.
- v. We acknowledge that personal, collegial and communal oversight (*episkope*) is embodied and exercised in our churches in a variety of forms, as a visible sign expressing and serving the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry.

b) Commitments

We commit ourselves to grow together in communion and to strengthen our partnership in mission. Through this commitment, we hope to enrich our continuing relationships with other churches in the United Kingdom and around the world. We will welcome opportunities to draw other churches into the activities and initiatives that we share.

As part of that commitment, we will continue to:

- i. pray for and with one another;
- ii. welcome one another's members to each other's worship as guests and receive one another's members into the congregational life of each other's churches where that is their desire;
- iii. explore opportunities for congregational partnership, formal as well as informal, in those cases where there are churches in close geographical proximity;

- iv. enable ordained ministers from one of our churches to exercise ministry in the other church, in accordance with the discipline of each church;
- v. identify theological issues that arise from growth towards fuller communion and be prepared to allocate resources to addressing them;
- vi. work together on social, political and ethical issues that arise from our participation in public life and be prepared to allocate resources to joint initiatives for addressing them.

In order to assist our churches in living out the acknowledgements and commitments of the Columba Declaration, we will appoint Co-Chairs and members of a Church of Scotland – Church of England Contact Group, whose purpose will be to coordinate the different activities that make up our rich relationship and develop new initiatives where these may be needed. The Contact Group will meet at least annually and will report annually to the Council for Christian Unity in the Church of England and the Committee on Ecumenical Relations in the Church of Scotland.

APPENDIX

Members of the Joint Study Group 2010-2015

Church of England

The Rt Revd Dr Peter Forster (Co-Chair)
The Revd Canon Professor Paul Avis (2010)
Dr Martin Davie (Co-Secretary 2011-2013)
The Revd Dr David Hilborn
The Revd Professor Morwenna Ludlow
The Revd Canon Professor Simon Oliver
The Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes (2011-12)
The Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen (Co-Secretary 2014-2015)

Church of Scotland

The Revd Dr John L. McPake (Co-Chair)
The Very Revd Dr Sheilagh Kesting (Co-Secretary)
The Revd Dr Alistair May
The Revd Dr Peter McEnhill (2010-2013)
The Revd Dr Lindsay Schluter

Scottish Episcopal Church

The Rt Revd Brian Smith (Co-Chair 2010)
The Rt Revd Dr Gregor Duncan (Co-Chair 2011-12)
The Revd Dr Harriet Harris (2010-11)
Mrs Norma Higgot (2010-11)
The Revd Prof David Jasper (2010-12)
The Revd John Lindsay (2012-2012)
The Rev Canon Dr Charlotte Methuen (2011-2012)

Scottish Episcopal Church Observer

The Revd John Lindsay (2013-2015)