

## An *Ordo* of Liturgical Consultation: The International Anglican Liturgical Consultations in 2013

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Two busloads of Anglican liturgists pulled up to the Maori church in Auckland for the opening welcoming eucharist and dinner of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC) of 2009. Upon instruction in ceremonial and protocol, the rubric-compliant liturgists sent the women of their group out of the buses first and into the church, whereupon they were met by a powerful Maori display. Women from Africa, Europe, North America, and Australia were greeted by their hosts' widely opened eyes and the ceremonial dancing of that culture, exercised in aggressive postures of intimidating strength. Having determined that it was safe for the men, the IALC women, following ceremonial, called back to them to leave the buses and come into the church. Welcome of the full group continued with joyful dancing, and then moved from the corporate to the intimate, as a reception line greeted each IALC member with a forehead-to-forehead press or greeting, and a gift of jade.

The images from this particular evening have stuck with me and seem an apt beginning for reflection on the recent life of the IALC. Auckland 2009 was an important turning point in the life of this organization. The hospitality and real presence of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia was both vessel for and pulse of the meeting. The graciousness and generosity of hospitality was not only experienced in the care of the Three-Tikanga Church for the comfort and enjoyment of the visitors, but in the boldness with which the local church presented itself, in its own diversities, and welcomed members to behold and enter into experiences of their lives-in-that-place, as much as reflecting upon our own contexts and cultures.

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There were many aspects to the backdrop to this meeting: controversy within the membership about whether the previously agreed-by-majority decision to focus on marriage rites was a good one; increasing tensions across some provinces of the Communion; the Anglican Communion Covenant process; and an awareness within the IALC of a shifting internal demographic dynamic as a younger generation—without long experience of past IALCs—was becoming more involved. Given tensions in the Communion and the fact that a good number of potential participants did not share a long history with each other, could we risk working on a topic wherein disagreements about sacramental theology might pale in comparison to the free-floating anxieties about the potential that questions of homosexuality or blessings of same-gender unions might come up? Was it safe to go in? Would it not be safer to avoid even the potential of a controversial matter sitting in the margins of a discussion?

In the end it was, in fact, safe to go in. We not only entered in, but set ourselves up to pray, and then to work, and then to pray again, within the nave of Holy Trinity Cathedral. The work accomplished was short of full—another full IALC meeting would be necessary in 2011 to complete the work on rites relating to marriage—but some things happened within that meeting that mark a shift in the life of the IALC. In what follows I shall reflect further on this recent history, and wonder aloud about some future possibilities.<sup>1</sup>

### *Gathering*

The International Anglican Liturgical Consultations gather liturgists and liturgical theologians from the provinces of the Communion for focused study of particular liturgical issues and for the building up of Communion life through the sharing of resources and insights across the provinces. They have been prolific in providing resources on critical matters for Anglican life and worship which have guided provinces in their own liturgical lives and the production of revised prayer books. From matters relating to initiation rites and the admission of

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is not intended to provide a full history of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultations. For further background, see Paul Gibson's paper, "The International Anglican Liturgical Consultations: A Review," at <http://anglicancommunion.org/resources/liturgy/docs/ialcreview.cfm>. This material can be augmented by more recent history provided in the IALC's 2012 Report to the Anglican Consultative Council XV meeting.

children to the eucharist, the shape of the eucharist, and ordination rites to reflections on liturgical formation of the whole people of God and the inculturation of worship, IALC documents bring together high quality in scholarship and reflection on pastoral practice.

The IALCs began as an independent meeting of Anglican liturgists. Academy-based scholars met up within the conferences of *Societas Liturgica*, the international scholarly academic society for liturgists and liturgical theologians. A more formal relationship with the instruments of the Communion, and especially with the Anglican Consultative Council, developed over the years. What had begun as a conversation among friends eventually required some organizational order. The York Consultation (1989) adopted guidelines (revised in 1995) to define the task of the Consultations and to provide for a steering committee and other procedures. The IALC currently operates under guidelines adopted at Berkeley in 2001. Membership broadened to include the original body of Anglican members of *Societas* along with those who serve as members of provincial liturgy commissions or their parallel, and official representatives of the provinces.

The mixture of scholars and members of provincial liturgical commissions—some of whom are academy-based scholars, while others are lay people or clergy, practitioners and pastors—provides a healthy basis for conversations and the advancement of work. Provinces have representation in the setting of agenda and in the creation of the outcomes of the IALCs, and a potentially wide basis of scholarship, theological views, and cultural, ecclesial, and pastoral experience can be brought to the table.

The number of participants from the latter categories—representatives of provinces, participants in the liturgical committees and commissions of the churches—has steadily increased over recent years. Along with scholars, many of whom are also members of their provinces' liturgical commissions, the diverse membership opens a widely-based exchange, and provides the opportunity for discussion of liturgical, pastoral, and theological developments within the provinces.

From its beginnings, IALCs have been a place where participants share with each other the processes and results of their work of liturgical revision and new creation. This has been and continues to be a tremendously important gift. Churches of the Anglican Communion have not been doing liturgical work in isolation from each other, but through IALC gatherings those working on new or revised rites,

translations, or other liturgical projects are able to engage in mutual listening and learning.

The development of prayer books from the 1980s onward is testament to the mutual intra-Communion exchange. While writing this article, I received an email from a person writing a book that in part addresses questions around the death of children. She wanted permission to reprint a prayer which, she explained, she had found in a recent Church of England diocesan source. She was told it was from New Zealand. Her contact in New Zealand informed her that it originated in Canada. This is one small and immediate example of how the importation—sometimes with adaptation, sometimes not—of source work from other provinces is now very much a standard practice across the churches of the Communion. What has now become a liturgical working habit conveys something of what it means to be in communion across the Communion: that we look to each other, learn from each other, acknowledge gifts in each other, and bring those gifts into our own local lives, with care not just to “import” but to make sure that the immigrant text becomes indigenous to our own places.

These habits of work are in some ways only one of the by-products of the IALCs. The principal work, of course, is the production, within the gatherings, of summary resources which provide guidance to Anglican churches worldwide in thinking about and working on liturgical revision. Gatherings reflect deeply and offer substantial and authoritative statements about matters from the admission of children to communion to the shape and critical elements of the funeral rite. These resources—from the Toronto statement on initiation rites to the most recent *Rites Relating to Marriage*<sup>2</sup>—are the “known” work of the IALCs, and are important resources for churches across the Anglican Communion. What is less known, perhaps, is the value of the habits of consultation and gifts of cross-Communion friendship and communication that have developed over more than twenty-eight years of these gatherings. *That we meet* is the oft-repeated insight of Desmond Tutu about a critical virtue of Anglicanism. That we gather from our diverse places of different languages and cultures, and engage with one another, is a gift of the IALCs.

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<sup>2</sup> *Rites Relating to Marriage: A Statement and Resources from The International Anglican Liturgical Consultation*, Auckland 2009 and Canterbury 2011; [http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/liturgy/docs/IALC\\_Rites\\_Relating\\_to\\_Marriage\\_ACC%2015.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/liturgy/docs/IALC_Rites_Relating_to_Marriage_ACC%2015.pdf).

A question emerges at present: How can we deepen the *gathering* between face-to-face meetings? And how might we engage even wider networks of liturgists and liturgical theologians in the conversation?

### *Word*

All provinces of the Communion are invited to send participants to the self-funding biennial IALC meetings. In 2011, nineteen provinces of the Communion sent official representatives—quite a fine representation when compared to other networks and commissions of the Communion. A bursary fund exists to support those who are unable to find funding within their own provinces. Over the years, generous gifts have helped to ensure the participation of (still yet not numerous enough) Anglicans from provinces of the two-thirds world, which is also the non-English-speaking world.

Those whose first language is not English have always been in the minority. Efforts have been made, casually and more officially, to provide translation and interpretation. However, the privileged language has always been and continues to be English—a sad reflection of Anglican history and contemporary economic realities, though hardly a reflection of the present face of worldwide Anglicanism.

Clearly, translation issues are very difficult. Ten years ago I led prayers at an IALC in part using French (I am Canadian, and a fluent French-speaker), and a remark was made to me privately that “of all languages, French is the most antithetical to Anglican liturgy.” During our times of worship at Canterbury 2011, those who led our daily eucharistic worship did so in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Maori, Japanese, Cantonese, Korean, Tagalog, and Swahili. What could make any language antithetical to Anglicanism, if what we understand by Anglicanism is a tradition of Christianity that takes its ecclesial incarnation in a local context with absolute seriousness?

But there is something more profound at stake in the question of which languages we use in liturgy. What is it to be Anglican? What is Anglican worship? The Prague statement on Anglican identity in worship,<sup>3</sup> taken together with the work in the 1990s on inculturation of worship, began a conversation that needs at every juncture in our international consultations to be revisited. In terms of habits and ways

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<sup>3</sup> *Liturgy and Anglican Identity: A Statement by the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation*, Prague 2005; <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/liturgy/docs/ialc2005statement.cfm>.

of working, the English-speaking majority need to bend and make space. We can no longer have translations and interpretations only going one way, or minority voices having to struggle with English as a second (or third or fourth) language in order to participate. In recent years excellent presentations in languages other than English have been made, with translation. And yet we struggle truly to hear each other.

One way of expanding the conversation might be to find multi-language speakers who are able to connect the IALCs with conversations about liturgy, theology, and pastoral life happening within regional groupings of churches—such as the Spanish-speaking churches or within the Réseau Francophone de la Communion Anglicane Mondiale, for example.

Obviously these are not questions unique to the gatherings of the IALC in the Anglican Communion! But perhaps these consultations are small enough for true diversity of language to be manageable, and also provide a broad enough set of relationships wherein some good progress can be built upon.

A few questions arise: Are we mature enough, as English-speakers, to listen to and absorb as *gifts* the liturgical expression of truly incarnated-in-local-context-and-language Christian faith within the Anglican tradition? And from that listening, can we all engage in a conversation—challenging to be sure, and ultimately enriching—about what our Anglican family is? Can we eventually get to a post-colonial-baggage point wherein we will be able mutually to challenge each other and engage the question of what is common in common prayer across the world?

### *Prayer*

Consultations are grounded in daily prayer and the eucharist. And like any other diverse group of Anglicans—especially adding liturgists into the mixture—matters of planning are always a bit of an experiment. How much is going to be about what is familiar-to-most, how much “new,” how much from particular places and languages do we include to honor the gifts present? *That we gather* and *that we pray*, however, are givens.

So too is, in this context, the very direct relationship between prayer and work. To Evagrius of Pontus, the theologian is one whose prayer is true—directed in truth to the Mystery who is Love and

Truth. Anglican tradition witnesses to the intimate connection between worship and theology. The study of the ordinal, or the question of liturgical formation, cannot be seen as somehow “removed” or strictly liturgical questions; they are intimately, and formatively, theological.

I confess my own bias here. I am not a trained “liturgist” as such. My formation is as a systematician. I fretted outwardly in early years when I took a job coordinating worship work at the Anglican Church of Canada: I am not a liturgist, I begged. “But,” said a wise mentor, “you are a theologian, and liturgy is theology in symbol.” I admit that at times I have pushed a theological button more often in a meeting of the IALC than has been welcome. In 2007, I brought a member’s concern to request an off-hours session to discuss how liturgical theologians might contribute critically to the Communion-wide debates around the Anglican Communion Covenant. There was a mixture of negative reaction and support: negative reaction principally because some felt that we were not gathered to reflect on these questions, but were there to work on funeral rites, a sentiment with which I was sympathetic. However, among those who did gather for the siesta-time conversation on a very hot afternoon in Palermo, shared insights emerged around the ways in which liturgists do theology, and thus have much to bring to Communion and provincial discussions of ecclesiology. If we put the mystery of communion with God in God’s outpouring of grace first in our theological deliberations, this would be a very different approach to Communion ecclesiology than presenting it as a problem of structural authority.

The Anglican Consultative Council 15 meeting in November 2012 recognized in its official press releases the contributions of the official networks of the Communion, where mission and relationships are deeply and broadly nourished. Reading over some of the reports to ACC15, notably that of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith, and Order, I was struck by the question of what the ecclesiology of IASCUFO’s report might look like if it were built on the foundations of the ecclesial experiences of the networks. It may be that the present major theological issue in the Anglican Communion is one of ecclesiology: What is a church? What is a communion of churches? What does it mean to be in communion? What happens when provincially autonomous churches live in communion with one another? Are we (as IASCUFO suggests) moving to being an international church? How then might that conversation be influenced by a



diverse, international group of those who do their theology from the starting point of the community gathered around font and table, in intercession and doxology, of those who have been working on and reflecting on, intentionally, the local community's worship within the *koinonia* in space and time with all the saints?

A question emerges: what might it mean to see the IALCs as one theological "center" in the life of the Anglican Communion? How might IALCs better connect with the networks, commissions, and dialogues of the Communion?

### *Meal*

*That we gather, that we pray, that we are gifted by God's grace with communion with God and with each other:* these realities are in the self-consciousness of IALC meetings. Historically and very much in the present there is within the IALCs a deep awareness of a growing common life, a communion across space and time that is celebrated.

Within common life in all parts of the church are to be found both creativity and conflict. Some of the conflict within IALCs has been on matters of theological/liturgical debate, with strongly held views and scholarly conclusions brought to argument. Fragile humans—and perhaps especially highly intelligent Anglicans in positions of teaching and other authority—squabble and also have serious conflicts, both interpersonal and doctrinal. In communion with each other, how do we do conflict well?

In the lead-up to Auckland 2009 there were palpable flutterings of anticipatory anxiety about possible conflict. Would we open the questions about marriage to discussion of same-gender relationships? But, as I described above, the context of gracious hospitality helped to soothe anxieties considerably, and I hasten to add that it was only a few who were seriously anxious.

Canterbury 2011 was a bit different. The Episcopal Church USA's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) formally requested, and was granted (as is allowed within the guidelines of the IALC) time on the agenda to consult with the IALC membership on the development of its rites for the blessing of same-gender couples. Having established early in the meeting that the work on *Rites Relating to Marriage* was to deal exclusively with heterosexual marriage (that being the norm in all the provinces' liturgical books), time was set aside from the scheduled work for this piece of consultation with the SCLM.



The members of the SCLM presented their commission's exploratory theological rationale and liturgical principles for the development of rites for the blessing of committed same-gender relationships, and enacted a draft rite. Some IALC members objected both upon advance receipt of the agenda and at the conference. The consultation-within-the-Consultation proceeded, allowing time for presentation and two sets of small group discussions and plenary feedback. And while the objections by the few who judged that we ought not to have included this process in the agenda at all were not acted upon by acquiescing to their requests, their voices were heard and the process continued, and all participated. Critical and creative reflections were offered to the members of the SCLM which were both appreciative and cautionary, but all with seriousness and substance. And we all continued to pray together, to commune together, to eat and to drink together, to grouse about processes together, and to think deeply together. Such is, I believe, the stuff of communion-in-the-Communion.

A question emerges: there was a gift within this time of conflict-in-communion at IALC. What conflicts await us in the future and how might we unearth the buried conflicts and bring them into the light, the better to engage with each other in-communion into the future?

### *Sending*

From each IALC gathering we are sent forth and back to our provinces, enriched and perhaps a bit baffled and puzzled from the experience, but always a bit smarter and wiser. The liturgical act of sending forth has me wondering about several questions in relation to the IALC.

By the end of the Auckland Consultation of 2009, participants knew that our work on *Rites Relating to Marriage* was not nearly half-baked and so the steering committee decided to plan for Canterbury 2011 to complete the work, and, in the interim years, to send the draft preliminary document out to provinces of the Communion for feedback. Those of us on the steering committee braced ourselves for mountains of reflections and reactions from the provinces of the Communion which did not arrive. Nevertheless, I believe that this first attempt to engage Anglicans in work-in-progress by the IALC was a good one and ought to be repeated. And so our "being sent" could in part be about opening to a conversational transparency in our work, of a kind that may engage voices we have not heard within the biennial gatherings. The steering committee is at present working

on ways to create an online network of the provincial commissions themselves, the better to be able to engage feedback and to share work among the provinces between meetings. How might we better connect and extend our work in relation to that of Anglicans in theological colleges and provincial, diocesan, and regional liturgical groups across the Communion? Perhaps this is a question we could not have envisioned in 1985, but such connections are possible now with contemporary and future communications technologies.

The second question for me relates to the work of the Anglican Communion and in particular of the Anglican Consultative Council with respect to the five Marks of Mission:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers;
3. To respond to human need by loving service;
4. To challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation;
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.<sup>4</sup>

I am of a province—the Anglican Church of Canada—wherein the Anglican Consultative Council’s “Marks of Mission” have become a mantra used in everything from the creation of parish renewal resources to priority and agenda setting for the work of diocesan, provincial, and General Synods.

The IALCs have programmatically moved from their time of work on sacramental rites through a time of reflecting on contextual issues such as inculturation and liturgical formation and Anglican identity, to a season of focused work on pastoral rites. I wonder if a next phase of IALC work might focus on the “Marks of Mission” in relation to liturgy. These would provide a context for revisiting former work within a new set of questions. What does it mean, for liturgy and worship, to baptize, teach, and nurture new believers? To seek to transform the unjust structures of society and to pursue peace and reconciliation? To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and renew the life of the earth? To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom? To respond

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<sup>4</sup> As adopted by the Anglican Consultative Council and adapted in 2012 at ACC-15; <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2013/1/24/ACNS5292>. The original fourth mark is: “To seek to transform unjust structures of society.”

to human need by loving service? Each of these hallmarks of the mission of the Anglican Communion bears reflecting on, through the lens of liturgy and worship. Some provinces, such as my own, have begun this liturgical/theological reflection. What might it be like to join an international conversation through this lens?

In the United States and Canada, the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission have for over forty years connected “liturgy” and “mission” intentionally. In other contexts these connections are made reflectively; in all local contexts these connections are real and compel us to reflect together. It is “safe to go in” to these conversations . . . but, I caution, beware: we may emerge very much changed. Thanks be to God.

