

Churches of the Anglican Communion in Continental

Europe

A letter to the 1998 Lambeth Conference

from

The College of Anglican Bishops in Continental Europe

COABICE

Bishop's Lodge
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Trinity Sunday 1997

Dear fellow bishops,

Resolution 63 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference "deplores the existence of parallel Anglican jurisdictions in Europe and in other areas, and recommends that the Lambeth Consultative Body (or its successor) should give early attention to the problems involved. The Conference recommends that, in any such area where there exists a Church with which we are in full communion, that Church should participate in the consultations."

There are four overlapping Anglican jurisdictions on mainland Europe. In Spain and Portugal the (Church of England) Diocese in Europe coexists with the Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church and the Lusitanian Church. The Diocese and the Convocation of American Churches in Europe (ECUSA) both have congregations in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. In these countries, as in the rest of Europe where only the Diocese in Europe has parishes, formal jurisdiction is no guide to the composition of congregations. All our parishes are "Anglican Episcopal" and typically contain a wide international membership.

Alongside parallel Anglican jurisdictions, account must also be taken of other Churches in communion, namely the Old Catholic Churches in Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland, and the "Porvoo" Churches in the Nordic and Baltic region. In this connection, we refer to some words from the report of Section III of the Lambeth Conference 1968: "Where in any particular area, there is a church in full communion with us, we should work for a closer integration of existing ministries and congregations, even to the extent of entrusting our work to them."

The four jurisdictions working on mainland Europe are committed to resolving this anomaly of parallel Anglican jurisdictions and so this paper comes from us after discussion with our respective synodical bodies. Representatives of the International Bishops' Council of the Union of Utrecht (the Old Catholic Churches) and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Bishops (the "Porvoo Communion") have also reflected on this text.

We believe that ultimately the future shape of Anglicanism on mainland Europe can only be determined properly within the wider context of Anglicanism in Europe as a whole (including Great Britain and Ireland), although such questions are beyond the scope of this paper.

The Anglican Episcopal community in continental Europe is partly expatriate and partly indigenous. Among the expatriates, who form the larger part of the congregations of the Convocation of American Churches and the Diocese in Europe, the majority are British and American, but there are also many from other parts of the world as well. The availability of English-language worship and ministry also attracts many members of other denominations who either have English as their first language or for whom English is more accessible than the language of the country. Indigenous Anglicanism is most clearly seen in Spain and

Portugal, where ethnically, culturally and linguistically the Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church and the Lusitanian Church are almost entirely Spanish and Portuguese respectively. Nevertheless there are expatriate members of both these Churches and throughout the continent increasing numbers of local nationals are joining congregations of the Convocation and the Diocese.

It is our belief that catholic order requires there to be only one bishop in each place. In a pluralistic continent like Europe, however, where there are great differences of culture, it is important that episcopé be adjusted to serve the diverse needs of people of different cultures. Proposals for overcoming the problem of parallel jurisdictions must not lead to a narrow uniformity or to the suppression of that legitimate diversity which is such a valued part of our Anglican tradition.

This will require many changes to existing episcopal and synodical structures. Among the significant steps already taken are the following:

- * the bishops of the four Anglican dioceses serve as assistant/assisting bishops in one another's jurisdictions
- * several priests of one Church are serving as pastors in one of the others
- * the Rector of an Episcopal parish in Germany is also the Diocese in Europe's Archdeacon for the Nordic and Baltic region and Germany ("The Archdeaconry of Scandinavia and Germany")
- * a council of Anglican Episcopal Churches in Germany has been established to assist Church of England and Episcopal congregations in that country in their missionary task in co-operation with other churches in Germany
- * lay and ordained representatives of the other jurisdictions are invited as observers at meetings of synods
- * joint episcopal visitations are held
- * bishops in the Nordic and Baltic countries are beginning to share in the oversight of Anglican congregations in their countries
- * annual meetings are held of the College of Anglican Bishops in Continental Europe with representative Old Catholic and Porvoo bishops as participating observers.

After several years of growing fellowship we have come to believe that the future will involve the establishment of an Anglican Province of Continental Europe. This conviction was confirmed at a meeting held in Worth, England, on 23rd and 24th May 1997. We have therefore agreed to begin a process of consultation with the clergy and laity of our respective jurisdictions, with our Metropolitans (i.e. the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Diocese in Europe, the Lusitanian Church of Portugal and the Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church; the Presiding Bishop of ECUSA for the Convocation) and with the Anglican Consultative Council. The aim of this consultation is to consider the proposals in this paper and agree on appropriate next steps.

The process of becoming a province cannot be hurried. It will require a gradual growing together of clergy and congregations, an increased sharing of resources and insights, and the securing of adequate funding. Nevertheless there is a timeliness about the proposal and we believe it right to seize the opportunity which is currently offered to us.

We now seek the support of the 1998 Lambeth Conference in our desire to move towards closer relations with each other as a contribution to the unity of the Church as a whole. We ask both the advice of our episcopal colleagues for the next stage of our growth together and their prayers for God's continued blessing on our labours.

signed:

(† John Hind)

for and on behalf of:

John Hind, Diocesan Bishop of Gibraltar (Diocese in Europe – Church of England)

Carlos Lopez Lozano, Diocesan Bishop of the Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church

Jeffery Rowthorn, Bishop in Charge of the Convocation of American Churches in Europe (ECUSA)

Henry Scriven, Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese in Europe (Church of England)

Fernando Soares, Diocesan Bishop of the Lusitanian Church of Portugal

Observers:

Andreas Aarflot, Bishop of Oslo, Representing the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Bishop

Hans Gerny, Bishop of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland Secretary of the International Bishops' Conference of the Union of Utrecht, Representing the International Bishops' Conference of Old Catholic Churches

1998 Lambeth Conference
Resolution V.6:

Anglican Provincial Structure for Continental Europe

This conference, noting with appreciation the progress made so far by the parallel Anglican jurisdictions in Continental Europe working both with each other and with the Churches in Communion in the area, resolves to encourage:

* continued exploration towards appropriate provincial structures for Anglican Continental Europe in partnership with other Churches in the service of the common mission of the Church; and

* the Church of England and the Episcopal Church of the United States of America to consider the provision of appropriate funding for such a province.

[Top](#)