

# **Generous Love:**

the truth of the Gospel and  
the call to dialogue

**an Anglican theology of  
inter faith relations**

*a report from the  
Anglican Communion  
Network for Inter Faith Concerns*

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## Foreword

Few subjects have more obviously grown in urgency and significance in the last few years than the whole area of relations between the great historic faiths of the world. The intellectual ferment of a couple of decades ago, when scholars began to reflect on the rival claims to truth or finality of the various faiths, has been brought home to everyone as our societies become more diverse – and, sadly, as conflicts on the global scene become more bitter. Many Christians are torn between wanting to affirm the importance of dialogue and not wanting to compromise their allegiance to the one Lord and Saviour whom they proclaim as the desire of all nations.

With great foresight, the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council set out some of the theological perspectives that might help shape a faithful and generous approach to other faiths. But the situation has moved on, both in theology and in practical relations between communities, so that there is a need to draw together some of the rich reflection that has been going on more recently. The present document is an attempt from an Anglican point of view to contribute to this drawing together. It is offered for study to the Anglican Communion – and more widely – in the hope that it will stimulate further theological thinking among Anglicans who share that double conviction that we must regard dialogue as an imperative from Our Lord, yet must also witness consistently to the unique gift we have been given in Christ.

I am delighted to commend it for study and discussion as a sensitive and valuable survey of this complex field. I hope and pray that it will help us find ways of understanding other religious traditions that will be both fresh and faithful.

✠ **Rowan Cantuar**



# 1 Beginning with God

Whenever as Christians we meet with people of different faiths and beliefs, we do so in the name and the strength of the one God who is Lord of all.

Addressing the pagan Athenians, the apostle declares that this God is the One in whom all human beings live, move and have their being; he is the One of whom all can say: 'He is not far from every one of us'.<sup>1</sup> We cannot measure the infinity of God's greatness nor exhaust the mystery of his being; the religions of humanity deceive themselves when they fail to acknowledge the limits of their knowledge.

We believe that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth the One God has made known his triune reality as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The boundless life and perfect love which abide forever in the heart of the Trinity are sent out into the world in a mission of renewal and restoration in which we are called to share. As members of the Church of the Triune God, we are to abide among our neighbours of different faiths as signs of God's presence with them, and we are sent to engage with our neighbours as agents of God's mission to them. Thus,

*We seek to mirror the Father's generous love.*

The God who has created our world is generous in grace and rejoices in diversity – 'O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all!'<sup>2</sup> He has created all men and women in his image, and he wishes all to enjoy that fullness of life in his presence which we know as salvation.<sup>3</sup> God cares for each person with a parental love; called to be perfect as our Father is perfect,<sup>4</sup> we know that we must show that same love and respect to all.

*We proclaim Jesus Christ as the one who shows us God's face.*

Jesus Christ the Son of God shows us 'the radiance of God's glory'.<sup>5</sup> He opens for us the way to the Father and we wish others to walk that way with us; he teaches us the truth which sets us free, and we wish to commend that truth to others; he shares with us his risen life, and we wish to communicate that life to others.<sup>6</sup> Our witness to Jesus as Lord must be attested by Christlike service and humility<sup>7</sup> if it is to be heard and seen by our neighbours as the good news of the Kingdom.

*We celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit made known through the fruit of the Spirit.*

It is not for us to set limits to the work of God, for the energy of the Holy Spirit cannot be confined. ‘The tree is known by its fruits’,<sup>8</sup> and ‘the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.’<sup>9</sup> When we meet these qualities in our encounter with people of other faiths, we must engage joyfully with the Spirit’s work in their lives and in their communities.



## **2 Our contemporary context and our Anglican heritage**

We are called to discipleship in very different contexts around the world today, but in every place we encounter religious diversity and complexity. Those who predicted in the last century that questions of religion would fade away have been proved wrong, as societies throughout the world are experiencing what has been called a ‘return of religion’. The heightened profile of religion, globally and locally, in the twenty-first century has both positive and problematic aspects. Individuals and communities use the language of religion to express important dimensions of their identity. Governments are exercised over the place of religion in public life, and the interaction of religious freedom and human rights. Aggressive and intolerant forms of believing and belonging are growing in all the world’s religious traditions; at the same time, in some societies there is an increasingly influential form of secularism which is hostile to all religion. Many commentators trace an intimate linkage between religious difference and some of the bitterest and most intractable conflicts of our times. Through migration and mission, faiths once largely confined to one part of the world have become worldwide in their distribution, while formerly homogeneous societies and neighbourhoods have become marked by diversity of religions. Fair and accurate media reporting of religious issues can help build understanding and trust, just as inadequate, misleading or stereotyping images can foment ignorance and fear.

These social and political developments have affected in some measure all the contexts within which we are called to live out our faith. In some places, we ourselves and our Anglican forebears have been directly instrumental in these processes of change; in others we have witnessed societies changing around us. In parts of our Communion, mission work was historically associated with Western political and economic expansion, and memories of that can still shape current perceptions. In every context, whatever its historical background and current pressures, we face the challenge of discerning the loving purposes of God within the religious plurality of humankind.

We are particularly aware of societies where Christians as a small minority feel themselves to be beleaguered and vulnerable; we recognise that other religious communities also may have the same experience in some situations. Still, in encounter we believe that it is possible to experience the renewal of our life in Christ as we meet with people of different faiths. Acting together with fellow

Christians of other churches, we as Anglicans can make a significant contribution to the complex and contested world of religious plurality.

For us as Anglicans, this contribution will be distinctively shaped by the ways in which our Church responded to the Christian plurality of the post-Reformation world, developing the contours of a Trinitarian approach which can inform our responses to religious diversity today.

Acknowledging that there is one God, the Creator, an Anglican approach dismisses nothing as outside God's concern, but attends to the world in its manifold differences in the expectation that it ultimately coheres, having one source and one goal in God. This is a discipline against sectarianism, and a resource for living with plurality.

Acknowledging that God is manifest in the particular human life of the Son, Anglicans have been committed to working out their concerns historically. As Jesus' ministry initiated an indefinite series of particular encounters, now limitless in reach in the light of his resurrection, so the Anglican Church has sought in making decisions to attend to the particular contexts of its work.<sup>10</sup> It has treated with caution generalised claims made for timeless and ahistorical systems, preferring to make its judgements – including those relating to other religions – through seeking to discern the implications of the catholic faith within particular historical and social situations.

Acknowledging that the work of the Holy Spirit is not just about 'inwardness' but provides the operative conditions for flourishing social life,<sup>11</sup> Anglicanism has sought the formation of social contexts in which pressures towards liberty and towards order are both made to subserve a positive vision of human community.<sup>12</sup> Refusing to prioritise either inner conscience or external authority alone in the quest for human flourishing, Anglicans have been determined to minister to whole communities, to find ways of enabling people of robustly differing convictions to live together so that a public good may be formed. This understanding of the Spirit as the source of ground rules for productive social life is transferable to new situations of religious plurality.

### **3 Shaping Anglican insights: reading the Scriptures**

The Bible has primacy in Anglican theological method, in that we seek to be a community living in obedience to Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God who is revealed through the words of Holy Scripture. In identifying the message of the Bible for the present, the Anglican method brings the insights of tradition and reason to the interpretation of the text in the light of experience. Our presence in, and engagement with, multi-religious contexts lead us to read the Scriptures in new ways. We come to recognise that the people of God have already known and grappled with the challenges and opportunities of living amid religious plurality, and that those experiences have shaped the formative texts of Scripture. Thus, Israel worshipped the one Lord their God amongst the nations of the Ancient Near East, each following their own god; the first followers of the Way confessed the name of Jesus amidst the many philosophies and cults of the Roman Empire, and within the kingdoms to the east of that Empire. As the people of God today, we can find the biblical text coming to life in a new way as we engage in our discipleship with issues which raise questions similar to those they faced. For many in our Communion, the Bible speaks with immediacy and clarity into their contemporary situations of inter-religious encounter.

Many passages of the New Testament testify to the passion and persistence with which the first Christians struggled to understand their place within God's purposes for his people Israel. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they all believed that God had decisively and finally revealed himself in the person and work of the Jewish Jesus of Nazareth, and it was that conviction which gave such intensity to their efforts to understand the theological significance of Jewish law and religion and the Jewish people. Out of the rich and complex texts which record those efforts there have grown different ways of understanding Christian-Jewish relations in the history of the Church. 'A right understanding of the relationship with Judaism is fundamental to Christianity's own self-understanding';<sup>13</sup> as we seek guidance in this important area today, we need to recognise the continuing vitality of Jewish life and religion over the last two millennia. We must 'reject any view of Judaism which sees it as a living fossil, simply superseded by Christianity'.<sup>14</sup>

Our Scriptures speak to us in new ways when they are brought alongside the sacred texts of other religions in the practice known as ‘Scriptural Reasoning’.<sup>15</sup> For example, believing ourselves to be in a dialogue with God enabled through the words of the Bible, it can be a profoundly humbling and creative experience for us to read the Bible alongside Muslims who likewise believe themselves to be addressed by the one God through the text of the Qur’ān. Hearing the stark divine imperative that ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour’,<sup>16</sup> and recognising the spiritual profundity of parts of the Hindu scriptures, we can ponder how often we collude with a distorted view of the other if we dismiss Hinduism as merely polytheistic idolatry. Treasuring the ‘read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest’<sup>17</sup> which our own Anglican spirituality commends in relation to the Scriptures, we can be challenged by the prolonged and intense attention which Buddhist tradition teaches as necessary for the sutras to become an interior reality. Set alongside the scriptures of other religions too, and the orally transmitted texts of other traditions, reading the Bible in these fresh contexts can both motivate and challenge us for engagement with people of different faiths.

## 4 Shaping Anglican insights: tradition and reason

Anglicans hold that Scripture is to be interpreted in the light of tradition and reason, meaning by these an appeal respectively to the mind of the Church as that develops and to the mind of the cultures in which the Church participates.<sup>18</sup> Tradition and reason are shaped by the lived experiences of Christians in their double contexts of Church and society, and they are inseparable as are those contexts.

The developing tradition of distinctively Anglican theological reflection on inter faith relations has grown within a broader ecumenical context, and has drawn significantly on insights from other Christian churches, at least since the 1910 International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. The Second Vatican Council's declaration *Nostra Aetate* of 1965 and the work of the World Council of Churches have greatly influenced the teaching of successive Lambeth Conferences. The 1988 conference commended to the Communion for study a key theological text entitled *Jews, Christians and Muslims: The Way of Dialogue*.<sup>19</sup> The 1998 Conference devoted particular attention to relations with Islam, and mandated the Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns (NIFCON) to 'monitor Muslim-Christian relations and report regularly'.

In their studies and translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, early Anglicans drew on the scholarship of Jewish rabbis. Later, as the sacred writings of other faiths became known to them, Anglicans continued to be prominent among those committed to the textual study of religion, often in co-operation with colleagues of other faiths. The Anglican use of reason also drew on philosophical, sociological and psychological insights to inform a theological response to the growing awareness of religious plurality. From every branch of Anglicanism, evangelical, catholic and liberal, missionary scholars, both women and men, contributed alongside local Christians in developing a theology for mission and dialogue through inter faith encounter.

Tradition and reason are deployed in Anglicanism through the lived experience of Christian discipleship in a very wide range of different contexts, and this variety has contributed to the marked pluriformity of Anglican theological approaches to inter faith issues. In every context, though, the Anglican experience has been shaped by a constant reference to prayer and worship, by a

concern for the welfare of the whole of society, and by the centrality accorded to pastoral practice. One of the distinctive emphases arising from these priorities has been to place at the centre of our experience a deep, strong and Christlike friendship with people of other faiths.

Across a range of contexts, whether as minority or majority communities, whether in places of vulnerability or of security, whether in relations of dialogue or of tension, Anglicans today continue to engage with issues of religious difference as a key testing ground for discipleship, bringing opportunities and challenges which must be held together. Already in this millennium, the Communion's Network for Inter Faith Concerns has convened or participated in a number of key consultations addressing within particular regional settings issues of widespread resonance. For example, in Bangalore (India) in 2003, a South Asian consultation on 'mission and dialogue' stressed the importance of engaging in trustful and respectful inter faith dialogue while vigorously advocating the cause of minorities suffering religious oppression.<sup>20</sup> In Oslo (Norway), also in 2003, Anglicans and Lutherans from the Northern European churches of the Porvoo Communion highlighted the need to maintain the integrity of the church's ministry while enabling the pastoral care of the other.<sup>21</sup> In Kaduna (Nigeria), in 2007, meeting in the Christian and Muslim setting of West Africa, a consultation on 'faith and citizenship' pointed to the challenge of witnessing persuasively to the Gospel while welcoming fellow citizens of other faiths as co-workers for the common good.<sup>22</sup>

From these and other gatherings, and from soundings across the Communion, it is evident that our churches can be renewed in their life and mission when they commit themselves as part of their discipleship to presence among and engagement with other faith communities. We can recognise the three following dynamic patterns in particular through which we are being led into this newness of life. First, maintaining our presence among communities of other faiths, we are abiding as signs of the body of Christ in each place. Second, engaging our energies with other groups for the transformation of society, we are being sent in the power of the Spirit into each situation. Third, offering embassy and hospitality to our neighbours, we are both giving and receiving the blessing of God our Father.

## 5 Celebrating the presence of Christ's body

Our Christian presence among other religions is honoured by ourselves as we keep faith with our commitment to witness in particular places, and it may also be honoured by others through the respect which they can show for that presence. Anglican churches are called to maintain a presence in very different places around the world, to sustain there a sense of sacred place, sacred time and consecrated lives, through which prayer and witness can be generated in local communities. In so doing, we become signs of the abiding life of God in his world, a life which invites others to participate in its rhythms. In some places, that invitation will be refused, and simply maintaining a Christian presence can be a costly and dangerous enterprise in a hostile environment. In other places, we may find that our presence is welcomed by people of other faiths, who honour its outward signs such as buildings, liturgy and priesthood, and who appreciate our pastoral care offered to all people irrespective of their faith.

Both rejection and acceptance can awaken in us a fresh sense of the treasures that have been entrusted to us to share with others. Christian faith is a gift we can easily take for granted, and at the same time we can begin to regard it as our own possession. It can be an experience of renewal to be reminded by others both of its life-giving value for us, and of its free availability to all. In this way, our presence among people of other faiths becomes for us a journey into a deeper understanding of who we are, 'and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time'.<sup>23</sup>

Inter-religious relations are not always marked by mutual respect. The sanctification of time and place is a project for other faiths as well as our own, and any public space or local community can become an arena of contest. We must be committed to working and praying for the peace and welfare of the cities and societies where we live,<sup>24</sup> as our encounters with others challenge us to display open and gracious attitudes to those who share those places with us. Since a presence which cannot be manifested openly to others cannot serve these purposes, we strive to safeguard the principles of religious freedom for all which are recognised as central to human rights.

Where the freedom of the Church is repressed or Christians are oppressed, we recognise that we are still called to the costly vocation of offering love and prayer to all. The continuing vitality of the suffering Church is a reminder to us all of the strength through weakness of the community which abides at the foot of the cross. Our understanding and practice of reciprocity in inter faith relations globally must be patterned on the Lord's teaching of a generosity which transcends retaliation – Jesus said: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, we recognise that as fellow members of the body of Christ it is imperative for us to offer our solidarity and support to Christians who have to witness to their faith in difficult circumstances.

Our commitment to be a stable presence in each place, to sanctify the life of the local community through prayer and witness, and in so doing to learn to value more deeply and share more widely the treasure entrusted to us, is a response to the incarnational logic that lies at the heart of the Christian story. The presence which we are living is that of the Body of Christ: the presence of the God who expresses himself in our midst in body language, by living a life, dying a death, and rising to a new life. Through his cross and resurrection, Jesus gives us forgiveness, healing and new life, and shapes us into a community which offers these blessings to our neighbours in a pattern of gracious and generous discipleship.

Most particularly, as we worship one who was rich but for our sake became poor,<sup>26</sup> emptying himself to take the form of a slave,<sup>27</sup> we remember that Jesus is present not only in the ministry and the sacraments of his Church but also in the persons of the poor, the hungry and the oppressed.<sup>28</sup> Our presence among them must be one of service, advocacy and empowerment, whatever their faith. We believe that in Christ God has come among us as a human living among humans, and as one who in his humanity crossed the boundaries which separated people of different groups from one another.



## 6 Communicating the energy of the Spirit

As we maintain our presence in the contexts of religious diversity and conflict to which our churches are called, we need also to be engaged with these contexts, both contributing to and drawing from the sources of energy in our societies which lead to transformation. Through that engagement, we find that we are being sent out to share in the Holy Spirit's mission of restoration and renewal. In some cases, the energetic forces of transformation in our societies will be channelled through the structures of religious communities. In others, they will be found in more flexible networks and groupings, which may yet draw inspiration and motivation from the values and beliefs of the world faiths. Churches can experience new life when they are open and adaptable enough to work in partnership with others for the common good of peace, justice and the integrity of creation. The convictions of John Wesley,<sup>29</sup> that though we cannot think alike yet we may love alike, and that we may be of one heart though we are not of one opinion, are compelling for those of us who work with people of differing beliefs on practical projects.

In a world of increasing materialism and commodification, as Christians we can find a shared purpose in affirming the spiritual values of life, renewing our commitment to a better world, and evoking afresh our energy in the service of others. Where such partnership is possible, we are opened up to the life-giving Spirit into whose power we are given over as the people of Jesus. The working of this Spirit is unrestricted and constantly surprising; when we are born and led by the Spirit, we know that he is like the wind, which 'blows where it chooses'; we 'hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from or where it goes'.<sup>30</sup> A recognition of the sovereign unpredictability of the Spirit's mission in the world can set us free for new ways of engaging with people of different faiths in seeking the common good.

Not all energy is creative, and not every powerful spirit is to be aligned with the Holy Spirit of God. Religion of every variety can have a dark, a repressive, a divisive, even a violent side. However inadequate the word 'fundamentalism' is as a term applied to different phenomena in different faith traditions, there is abroad in all communities a spirit of defamation of 'the other', of the hardening of differences into divisions, of the suppression of variety, of the disempowerment of the vulnerable. There is abuse of religion for self-advancement, for the promotion of sectional interests, for the justification of comfortable lifestyles and of the exploitation of others. Partly as a result of such distortions, the appeal of a militant secularism is growing in many places. These dangers show the need for careful discernment when Anglicans engage with others, an engagement which must test our own motives as well. In the power of the Spirit, we have been entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation, and one of the most testing ways in which we demonstrate that power in today's world is through our commitments to conflict mediation, peace making, truth telling and community building in places where people of different religions are at enmity with one another. To fulfil those commitments requires us to seek the empowerment and inclusion of women, children, marginalised people and any others who are excluded.

The Spirit of God who leads us into all truth, and thereby sets us free, is the same Spirit who searches each of our hearts. It is this Spirit, coming to us in our weakness, who enables us to witness to the lordship of Jesus, and to commend to others the faith which gives us life through his name. So evangelism belongs together with practical co-operation, work for reconciliation, and inter faith dialogue, as all are ways of sharing in the energetic communication which is the mission of God's Spirit today. The desire to see others come to Christ is a primary motivation of that mission, and when the Holy Spirit works within the heart of our neighbours to bring them to faith in Jesus, we will rejoice. We always remember, though, that this is the Spirit's work, not ours, and we repudiate any attempt to coerce or manipulate people into conversion.

## 7 Practising the embassy and hospitality of God

As God both pours out his life into the world and remains undiminished in the heart of the Trinity, so our mission is both a being sent and an abiding. These two poles of embassy and hospitality, a movement ‘going out’ and a presence ‘welcoming in’, are indivisible and mutually complementary, and our mission practice includes both.<sup>31</sup> In the Gospel Jesus teaches his disciples to deliver their embassy within the setting of receiving hospitality: ‘Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house”.’<sup>32</sup> As disciples we have to learn to be guests, and the proclamation we make in our embassy is in the first place the blessing of peace, the announcement of the good news of the Kingdom, and the healing of the sick. As ambassadors of Christ, our mission is to meet, to greet, and to acknowledge our dependence on other people and on God: ‘We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake’.<sup>33</sup> The embassy which has been entrusted to us is the ministry of reconciliation,<sup>34</sup> and the giving and receiving of hospitality is a most powerful sign that those who were strangers are reconciled to one another as friends.

The Bible is full of images which point to the theological depth of the host-guest relationship. As God’s people, we meet the test of hospitality when we offer the best provisions we have to the unexpected visitor, and still more through the time and care we give to addressing our guests’ weariness and thirst.<sup>35</sup> We will do that out of the integrity of our Christian faith and practice; true hospitality is not about concealing our convictions, but about expressing them in a practical way. We ourselves can in turn receive in friendship the hospitality of others, which may speak powerfully to us of the welcoming generosity that lies at the heart of God. Through sharing hospitality we are pointed again to a central theme of the Gospel which we can easily forget; we are re-evangelised through a gracious encounter with other people.

The challenges to the practice of hospitality are many and serious. Our guests may be suspicious, fearful, or hostile, as we may be when we are guests. There may always be failures to reciprocate on either side. It is possible to use the practice of hospitality, not truly to accept and to recognise one another, but rather to suppress difference through a superficial bonhomie. We have to learn that being embarrassed, perplexed and vulnerable may be part of our calling as both guests and hosts, for it is when we welcome one another in all our differences that we are truly enriched by one another.

Hospitality is strengthened through the always time-consuming, often costly, and sometimes painful process of building trust. As that trust develops, sharp distinctions between host and guest may fall away, as they do at any convivial meal. We come to learn that the spaces in which we meet one another do not ultimately belong to either host or guest; they belong to God, as do the so-called 'neutral' spaces of public life. None of the places, situations or societies where we meet and greet are the exclusive territory of any one group; they are entrusted by God to be shared by everyone, since all humans are made in God's image.

Anglican spirituality maintains that at the heart of our life as a Christian community is a meal for those who know themselves to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth. At the breaking of the bread our Lord himself came to his disciples as one at first unknown.<sup>36</sup> The Eucharist opens us to an awareness that we too are guests of the Father waiting for the completion of his loving purposes for all. As he strengthens us with bread for the journey to carry us to that place which is a home for all the nations of the world, so here we share our life with our neighbours of all faiths as citizens of our earthly kingdoms. We wait for the day when all humanity together will meet the one divine host, the Father who invites all his children to share the joy of the banquet he has prepared.

## 8 Sending and abiding

Our human relationships at their best are marked by a dynamism and interactivity capable of changing all involved through genuine encounters which lead us into new life. Those we called ‘other’ are no longer over against us, but present to us and us to them, human beings whose energy connects with ours and ours with theirs, those who are fellow guests in God’s house with us. So we come to know our neighbours of different faiths in a new way, both as fellow human beings, and also as those who seek, as we do, to orient their lives towards the One who is the source of all life. We will listen to and receive from our neighbours even while we speak and give to them, and in this mutuality of encounter we can experience God’s gracious presence in a new way. In our time, we have seen a new readiness on the part of scholars and leaders of other faiths across the world to engage seriously at a theological level with the Christian faith. Two notable expressions of this have been the statements *Dabru Emet* and *A Common Word*, produced respectively by international groups of Jewish and of Muslim scholars.<sup>37</sup>

Our pressing need to renew our relationships with people of different faiths must be grounded theologically in our understanding of the reality of the God who is Trinity. Father, Son and Spirit abide in one another in a life which is ‘a dynamic, eternal and unending movement of self-giving’<sup>38</sup>. This is expressed in a sending and being sent by the Father of the Son and the Spirit which is eternal, yet which also reaches out into our time and space to draw us into God’s life. In our meeting with people of different faiths, we are called to mirror, however imperfectly, this dynamic of sending and abiding. So our encounters lead us deeper into the very heart of God and strengthen our resolve for inter faith engagement.

We will maintain our presence among communities of different faiths as we celebrate Jesus as the way, the truth and the life for us and for all people. We will channel our energies into connection, communication and reconciliation with other faith groups as we open ourselves to the energy of the Spirit. We will build trust through giving and receiving hospitality and embassy as we respond to the Father’s gracious invitation. We recognise that the actuality of our Christian life as it is lived among people of other faiths often does not meet these aspirations, and this may be painfully evident to our neighbours also. Theology is always in tension with experience, and in inter faith relations we

need to live with provisionality, paradox and disappointment. Nevertheless, as people who find healing through the broken body of Christ and confidence in the daring venture of the Spirit, we must not be deterred by the risk of failure or rejection. Even in our sin, weakness, fear and timidity, we are constantly challenged by the God who calls us to abide with our neighbours as signs of his presence with them, and who sends us to engage as agents of his mission among them. Through prayer and worship the triune God forms us to be a people called into newness of life in our inter faith encounter.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.*

## Notes

1. Ac 17.27-28. St Paul indeed goes on to cite the words of the poet Aratus: 'For we too are his offspring'.
2. Ps 104.24.
3. 1 Tim 2.4.
4. Mt 5.48.
5. Heb 1.3.
6. Jn 14.6.
7. 2 Cor 4.5.
8. Mt 12.33.
9. Gal 5.22f.
10. This can be seen as a theological parallel to the development of English common law, with its appeal to precedents at the same time as its openness to new applications in new cases.
11. Pentecost, the Christian Feast of the Spirit, corresponds to the Jewish Festival of *Shavuot*, associated with the giving of the Torah, which is likewise concerned with social life as well as with inward response to God.
12. For our Anglican forebears, seeking to chart a *via media* for their Church in the divided Christian world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the pressures towards libertarianism and towards authoritarianism were identified with Protestant Nonconformism and Roman Catholicism respectively.
13. *Jews, Christians and Muslims: The Way of Dialogue* (commended for study by the Lambeth Conference 1988), §13.
14. *Ibid.*, §16.
15. Scriptural Reasoning is 'a practice of group reading of the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that seeks to build sociality among its practitioners and release sources of wisdom and compassion for healing our separate communities and for repair of the world' (Steven Kepnes, 'A Handbook for Scriptural Reasoning', p.23, in David F. Ford and C. C. Pecknold, ed., *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); also posted on the *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* website, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/jsrforum/>). The practice has its origins in dialogue between Jewish and Christian scholars.
16. Ex 20.16, Dt 5.20.
17. *Book of Common Prayer*, Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent.
18. *Virginia Report* (Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, 1997), §§ 3.8-3.11.
19. Published as Appendix 6 in *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988 – The Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (ACC, 1988). In preparation for Lambeth 1988, the Anglican Consultative Council republished, for study and reflection by all the dioceses of the Communion, the 1984 Church of England report *Towards a Theology of Inter-Faith Dialogue*, together with a response by Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali entitled *That Which Is Not To Be Found But Which Finds Us*.
20. Report posted on <http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org>.
21. Guidelines posted on [www.porvoochurches.org](http://www.porvoochurches.org).
22. Report posted on <http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org>.
23. T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', V, in *Four Quartets*.
24. Jer 29.7
25. Mt 5.44.
26. 2 Cor 8.9.
27. Phil 2.7.
28. Mt 25.31ff.

29. John Wesley, Sermon XXXIV in *Forty-Four Sermons on Several Occasions*. Wesley draws from his text, 2 Kgs 10.15, the need for a ‘catholic spirit’ among Christians of differing persuasions, but the application of this to the wider and deeper differences between religions is easy to see.
30. Jn 3.8.
31. *Embassy, Hospitality and Dialogue: Christians and People of Other Faiths* – Report to the 1998 Lambeth Conference by Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, posted on <http://www.lambethconference.org/>.
32. Lk 10.5-9.
33. 2 Cor 4.5.
34. 2 Cor 5.20.
35. Gen 18.1-15, Heb 13.2.
36. Lk 24.16.
37. *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Jews and Christianity* (2001), posted on [www.icjs.org/what/njsp/dabruemet.html](http://www.icjs.org/what/njsp/dabruemet.html); *A Common Word between Us and You: An Open Letter and Call from Muslim Religious Leaders* (2007), posted on: [www.acommonword.com](http://www.acommonword.com).
38. *The Church of the Triune God – The Cyprus Agreed Statement of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue* (ACC, 2006), II.5.