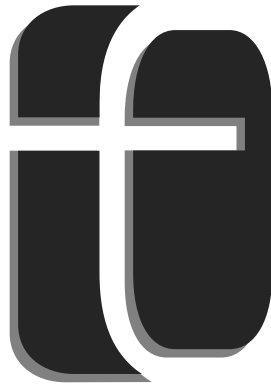


HANDBOOK FOR ECUMENISM



*office of  
ecumenical  
and interfaith  
relations*

*That they all may be one. John 17:21*

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**For the bishops, diocesan ecumenical officers  
and others representing the Episcopal Church  
in relations with Churches of other traditions.**

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## **SECTION F: ECUMENICAL DIALOGUES**

Dialogues having Episcopal/Anglican participation are part of a much wider network of dialogues conducted by the Christian World Communions internationally and by churches in the United States and other nations. Collections of the results are found in Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a Word Level, Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, Editors, and in Building Unity: Ecumenical Dialogues with Roman Catholic Participation in the United States, Joseph A. Burgess and Jeffrey Gros, Editors.

The last comprehensive theological analysis of the four major national ecumenical dialogues having Episcopal Church participation took place in 1978. It is published in A Communion of Communion: One Eucharistic Fellowship, J. Robert Wright, Editor, together with related recommendations in "The Detroit Report". Recommendations of the National Consultation on Ecclesiology in 1993 regarding the national dialogues are available in Ecumenism of the Possible: Witness, Theology and the Future Church.

### **United Methodist Church - Episcopal Church**

The 1988 Lambeth Conference, expressing regret that there was no international dialogue with churches of the Methodist tradition, proposed to the World Methodist Council that the omission be put right. The Council agreed, and the Anglican - Methodist International Commission met in 1992 and 1993, and an interim report Sharing in the Apostolic Communion was sent to the churches of both communions with a request for advice. The Standing Commission issued an Episcopal Church response in 1995 (available from the Ecumenical Office). A full report from the International Commission was issued in 1996.

A pioneering regional North Carolina United Methodist - Episcopal Dialogue, begun in 1992, continues to explore relations between the churches and to consider the interim report from the International Commission. In 1994 the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church, responding to General Convention - initiated explorations, voted to "affirm the bilateral conversation to begin between the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church, USA, initiated by the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns."

The mandate for a United Methodist-Episcopal dialogue is found in resolution A029 of the 1994 General Convention, which calls for "...the development of relationships between congregations of the Episcopal Church and those of our sister churches in the Consultation on Church Union for the purpose of common worship and study along with joint efforts on behalf of the mission of the Church..."

The 1998 Lambeth Conference, in resolution IV.17, recommends that member Churches of the Anglican Communion engage with their Methodist counterparts in study and the search for unity. Specifically, the Lambeth resolution recommends that a Joint Working Group with the World Methodist Council "prepare, in full accordance with the principles set out in the report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission, guidelines for moving beyond acknowledgement to the reconciliation of churches and, within that, the reconciliation of ordained ministries and structures for common decision making."

The United Methodist-Episcopal bilateral dialogue began meeting in June of 2002 and has met regularly, exploring questions of sacramental theology and the historic episcopate. In 2005, the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church approved a proposal for Interim Eucharistic Sharing with the Episcopal Church. The 2006 General Convention of the Episcopal Church approved the resolution, inaugurating the same relationship with The United Methodist Church as this church had with the ELCA and its predecessor bodies from 1982-2001. Guidelines for Eucharistic sharing between the United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church are available from the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. A study guide for use in congregations is due out in late 2006 and will be widely disseminated throughout the church. The dialogue team will spend the 2006-2009 triennium focusing on reconciling the ordained ministries of the two churches.

### **African Methodist Episcopal Churches and the Episcopal Church**

On several occasions, the General Convention asked the Standing Commission to explore possibilities for bilateral dialogues with member churches of the Consultation on Church Union (Reformed, Methodist, Disciples). Conversations between the Presiding Bishop and bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist