

African Phase Communiqué 2002

An African phase of international conversations between Anglicans and Baptists was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 24-26 January 2001. This regional meeting follows two previous phases held in Norwich (for Europe) in 2000 and Yangon (for Asia/Pacific) in 2001. Participants came, representing their respective Churches in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe and joined the members of the "continuation committee" which is conducting these regional gatherings on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance and the Anglican Communion.

On the first evening, the Revd Daniel Theuri and the Revd Samson Ojienda of the Kenya Baptist Convention and the Revd Chalton Ochola of the Anglican Church of Kenya welcomed the delegates on behalf of the local churches. The Anglican and Baptist representatives gave an overview of the life of their respective communions in Africa. Presentations were given on aspects of baptism, local Anglican-Baptist relations, and mission and ministry in the African Church. The plenary discussion drew together some rich insights from the African context into the themes which emerged from previous regional conversations, namely: continuity and story; recognition and acceptance; contextual mission and ministry; baptism and Christian initiation; membership and community; oversight and episcopate; and confessing the faith. Many common concerns from Baptists and Anglicans were shared with regard to the experience of "partnership" with overseas Churches. In reflecting on the story of Baptist and Anglican life in Africa, many perspectives were shared on the place of the ancestors in the faith, on the prophetic role of the Church in society, and on Church growth, evangelism and Church planting. A special presentation was given by the Revd Sam Harrell on the "Kids to Kids" programme which involves Anglicans and Baptists, among others, in providing for approximately 60 of Nairobi's street children every day. Indeed, the challenges facing Anglicans and Baptists as their Churches seek to address the great needs of the African continent were underlined in the many testimonies of the participants.

The participants concluded by recognising the depth of fellowship shared at the meeting and departed with an African song of hope, Anaweza anaweza bwana - the Lord is able!

The ABIC is the official instrument of the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance engaged in theological discussions which have the following objectives:

1. To enable Anglican/Baptists to learn from each other and to deepen understanding of relationships between our two communions in the light of their histories.
2. To share with each other how we understand the Christian faith and to work toward a common confession of the Apostolic Faith.
3. To identify issues of doctrine and the nature of the church to be explored further in possible future conversations.
4. To look for ways to cooperate in mission and community activities and increase our fellowship and common witness to the Gospel.

Further meetings will be held in 2003 in the Caribbean, Latin America and North America. There is a continuing committee consisting of four Anglicans and four Baptists who will draft a report following the regional meetings to be submitted to the Anglican Consultative Council and the Baptist World Alliance in 2005.

The following persons participated in the Nairobi meeting:

Anglicans:

Victor Atta-Baffoe (Ghana)
Paul Avis (England, acting co-chairman, continuation committee)
Alyson Barnett-Cowan (Canada, continuation committee)
David Hamid (Co-secretary, continuation committee, Anglican Communion Office)
Nolbert Kunonga (Zimbabwe)
Valentino Mokiwa (Tanzania)
Hannington Mutebi (Uganda)
Chalton Ochola (Kenya)
Nicholas Okoh (Nigeria)
Linda Schwartz (South Africa)

Baptists:

Frank Adams (Ghana)
Chamanorwa Chiroma (Zimbabwe)
Tony Cupit (Co-secretary, continuation committee, Baptist World Alliance)
Paul Fiddes (England, co-chairman, continuation committee)
Louise Kretzschmar (South Africa)
Ken Manley (Australia, continuation committee)
Douglas Waruta (Kenya)
Malcolm Yarnell (USA, continuation committee)

Administrative support was provided by Frances Hiller from the Anglican Communion Office.

Nairobi, 26 January 2002