

but it seems safe to say, looking back over these twenty-five years now, that any changes will continue to be slow, piecemeal, and ambivalent. When as a very young man I met with seasoned ecumenists in Quebec in 1990, they were coming off the halcyon days of the post-conciliar period (c. 1965–1990) when expectations among many for full structural unity among Christians were now being increasingly abandoned.

Even though such a vision of structural unity arguably still animated *UUS*, it seems to me most Catholic and Orthodox ecumenists today recognize, and accept, that unity among us will be much more modest, and in fact will rightly conform more closely to practices of the first millennium. That is to say, the unity we seek with the Orthodox will consist largely in the restoration of eucharistic Communion and sacramental sharing. Beyond that, as the late pope recognized, “whatever relates to the unity of all Christian communities clearly forms part of the concerns of the primacy” (*UUS* §95), but the ways in which such primacy is exercised still remain to be seen.

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II. “New Paths as We Journey toward the Future”: Reflections on Anglican/Episcopal-Roman Catholic Dialogue since *Ut Unum Sint*

“Today, our world is experiencing a tragic famine of hope. How much pain is all around us, how much emptiness, how much inconsolable grief. Let us, then, become messengers of the comfort bestowed by the Spirit. Let us radiate hope, and the Lord will open new paths as we journey toward the future.”¹⁵ These challenging and uplifting words by His Holiness Pope Francis were part of an ecumenical service with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Coptic Archbishop of London this year. Preaching during the impact of COVID-19 worldwide, Pope Francis’ message also frames the challenges and hopes of Anglican/Episcopal-Roman Catholic dialogue in the twenty-five years since Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (*UUS*), “That They May Be One.”

The Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church share 1,500 years of common history; this fellowship was broken in the sixteenth

¹⁵ Hattie Williams, “Pope Joins Welby and Sentamu for Pentecost Service,” *Church Times*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/29-may/news/uk/pope-joins-welby-and-sentamu-for-pentecost-service>.

century.¹⁶ We in the Anglican Communion continue to live into our catholic heritage today. Shortly after the Second Vatican Council, the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church initiated the Anglican-Roman Catholic Theological Consultation in the United States (ARCUSA). In 1966, then Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI called for the churches to undertake serious dialogue and initiated the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). The goal of this commission is to examine the serious obstacles that serve as impediments to full communion within a climate of mutual respect. For more than fifty years, each Archbishop of Canterbury has met with the pope in Rome to encourage continuing dialogue. Recently, Pope Francis and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby recognized the differences between the churches that continue to be obstacles to unity—the way authority is exercised in the church, the ordination of women, issues regarding human sexuality—yet also pledged to witness “to this common faith in Jesus by acting together.”¹⁷ The common actions cited in the declaration include sustainable development for all people, especially the marginalized, the discarded, and victims of violence, through education, health care, food, clean water, and shelter.

Most recently, in April 2020, ARCUSA met to complete its work on a document focused on reconciliation. Previous work of the consultation includes “A Pastoral Guide for Understanding Our Two Churches” (2007), “Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ” (2007), and “Ecclesiology and Moral Discernment” (2014).¹⁸

Between the years 1981 and 2005, ARCIC I and II generated several agreed-upon statements on the church as “communion” and on “emerging ecclesiological and ethical factors making the journey more difficult and arduous.” In 2006, a common declaration signed by Rowan Williams, then

¹⁶ Several dates are cited for the break of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church. Two of the most common are 1532, when Henry VIII declared himself the Supreme Head of the Church, and 1570, when Pope Pius V excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I, who established the church in England. See Robert W. Prichard, ed., “A Pastoral Guide for Understanding Our Two Churches,” *The Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the United States* (ARCUSA), October 19, 2007, https://episcopalchurch.org/files/documents/eir.a_pastoral_guide_with_bibliography_june_09.pdf.

¹⁷ Francis and Justin Welby, “Common Declaration of His Holiness Pope Francis and His Grace Justin Welby Archbishop of Canterbury” (October 5, 2016), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20161005_dichiarazione-comune_en.html.

¹⁸ See Richard Mammana, “Anglican-Roman Catholic Theological Consultation in the United States of America Issues Communiqué,” *Episcopal News Service*, April 23, 2020, at <https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/publicaffairs/anglican-roman-catholic-theological-consultation-united-states-america-arcusa>.

Archbishop of Canterbury, and Pope Benedict XVI renewed the vision of full communion. ARCIC III (2011–2017) explored the instruments of communion on three levels of the church: local, regional, and worldwide/universal. “We have become partners and companions on our pilgrim journey, facing the same difficulties and strengthening each other by learning to value that which God has given to the other, and to receive them as our own in humility and gratitude.”¹⁹

As a priest and scholar in the Episcopal Church, one of the autonomous churches within the Anglican Communion, and the dean of a historically United Methodist, ecumenical, and interreligious theological school, I come to this dialogue with a deep commitment to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. A note here on Episcopal polity is needed to highlight the different ways *dispersed* authority, rather than binary authority, is exercised in the Anglican Communion and in the Episcopal Church. The churches within the Anglican Communion participate in a shared (colonial) history, commitment to regional autonomy in governance, and worship through the *Book of Common Prayer*. By the middle of the twentieth century, Anglicanism was no longer characterized as an extension of English culture, but as a global and interdependent fellowship of member churches. Though an attempt to establish a worldwide binding authority throughout the Anglican Communion was proposed by the *Anglican Covenant* (2009), most of the provinces (member churches), including the Episcopal Church, did not approve it. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of Cape Town once famously noted that the Anglican Communion “is a messy but lovable family.”²⁰

Churches within the Anglican Communion do not always agree theologically, nor do we regard uniformity as integral to unity. The Episcopal Church, created in the eighteenth-century United States with the first democratic church constitution in the world, is a member of the Anglican Communion through the bonds of fellowship. We recognize that all authority comes from God and that it is essentially *relational* in character. Authority in the church is modeled after that exercised by Jesus—personal, communal, and collegial. Thus, there are wide differences across the Anglican Communion theologically, but also in terms of pastoral practices, such as ordination and marriage. “Communion, then, is always a task, a challenge,” writes noted Episcopal theologian and ecclesologist, the Rev. Ellen K. Wondra, “a

¹⁹ John Bauerschmidt, “ARCIC III, “Walking Together on the Way,” *The Living Church*, August 13, 2019, <https://livingchurch.org/covenant/2019/08/13/arcic-iii-walking-together-on-the-way-learning-to-be-the-church-local-regional-universal/>.

²⁰ Quoted in many places, most recently in C. K. Robertson, *Why Go to Church?* (New York: Church Publishing, 2017), 11.

project in which persons and groups must engage across the lines of difference.... Communion entails a commitment to stay in relationship in recognition that the fullness of communion, like the fullness of truth, lies ahead."²¹

This vision of the fullness of communion, "That They May Be One," suggests that no one vision of the church equals the fullness of truth and that our commitment to the ecumenical movement means we are open to being *changed* through our relationship with one another. So, what potentially lies ahead for Anglican/Episcopal-Roman Catholic dialogue in the twenty-first century?

When *Ut Unum Sint* was released in 1995, the encyclical was praised by Episcopal Church leadership for a "new openness," especially regarding Pope John Paul II's willingness to examine the role of the papacy in an expansive way. Then Episcopal Bishop of Chicago, Frank T. Griswold,²² cochair of the dialogue between the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church, stated that he believed the pope was demonstrating a sensitivity to the ecumenical community and found it "extremely heartening that he would raise the question of the reform of the papacy."²³ Other Episcopal participants in the dialogue believed that the encyclical came after a decade during which our Roman Catholic counterparts considered ecumenism a low priority; the pope desired to halt the decline by irrevocably affirming the ecumenical commitment of the Roman Catholic Church. Further, *Ut Unum Sint* reaffirmed that "legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the Church's unity, but rather enhances her splendor and contributes greatly to the fulfillment of her mission."²⁴

Now Pope Francis' emphasis on the pastoral context, empowerment of the laity, social vision, global mission, and the renewal of both ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, rather than on doctrinal purity, opens further opportunities for Christians in the Anglican tradition to become active partners with Roman Catholics in healing the world.²⁵ "These are signs

²¹ Ellen K. Wondra, *Questioning Authority: The Theology and Practice of Authority in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), 250–51; see also xi, 9, 25–26, 166–67.

²² Bishop Griswold was later elected the 25th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, serving from 1998 to 2006.

²³ Episcopal News Service, "Protestant Church Leaders Cautiously Welcome Pope's Encyclical on Ecumenism," *Episcopal News Service*, June 8, 1995, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.pl?pr_number=95-1133.

²⁴ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (May 25 1995), http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html, §50.

²⁵ Christopher Hill, review of *Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism*, ed. Gerald Mannion, *Church Times*, November 3, 2017, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/3-november/books-arts/book-reviews/a-new-papal-style-or-is-it-more>.

of hope in a very down to earth and genuine way,” said the Most Rev. David Moxon, director of the Anglican Center of Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury’s representative to the Holy See. Moxon does not see a need for further statements on what holds Christians together beyond *Ut Unum Sint*. Rather, he argues that Christians have much work to do in living by the principles of *Ut Unum Sint* every day. “A new day will be made visible,” Moxon said, “by clear demonstrations of unity over issues like justice and peace, like the environment, like solidarity with the poor, and with ordinary acts of compassion where the wounds of the world bleed the most.”²⁶

The realities of the Christian ecumenical context have grown increasingly diverse and complex over the past twenty-five years. Christian churches in North America and in Europe no longer have the same moral authority as they did a generation ago. Christianity is more pluralistic, and non-Christian religious communities are not only larger, but playing a more visible role in their societies. Although the dialogues begun in the era of *Nostra Aetate* should not be understated, people of faith in local communities are now enthusiastically working together on issues of deep concern—poverty, racial justice, immigration reform, gender equality, climate change, globalization, LGBTQI equity, to name a few—within a range of ecumenical and interreligious relationships that are porous and fluid.²⁷ In my experience, part of what the ecumenical movement of the last twenty-five years gives to the world is a framework within which we practice formation from the perspective of the transformation of whole persons in community. Ironically, the best way we can witness to the importance of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is to give the world *more* than churches.

Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue emanates from the collective belief that we are all, despite our theological differences, members of one human community; if life is improved for just one person due to our efforts, all benefit. “My humanity is bound up in yours,” said Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, “for we can only be human together.”²⁸ Many of the religious leaders of the world support the notion that, even though there are many differences among us, we also share in the common work

²⁶ G. Jeffrey MacDonald, “‘Signs of Hope’ in Rome,” *The Living Church*, June 4, 2013, <https://livingchurch.org/2013/06/04/signs-of-hope-rome/>.

²⁷ Peter Colwell, “From Interfaith to Inter-Religious: Describing the new Post Inter Faith Context,” Lent 2014, <https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/From-Interfaith-to-Inter-Religious-Describing-the-new-Post-Inter-Faith-Context.pdf>.

²⁸ The Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* (New York: Avery: 2016), 60.

of peace and reconciliation for the sake of a better world and the preservation of our planet.

One of the great Talmudic sages, Maimonides, taught that although it is not our responsibility to complete the healing of the world, we cannot morally refrain from participation. In a world where the majority are marginalized, religion easily becomes a tool of oppression when limited to theological abstractions, or correct belief, or internal squabbles, while most of humanity is deprived of basic human needs, and the fate of the planet is in serious jeopardy. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is not only about mutual understanding, but about creating a better world. In this way, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue are critical to human survival. May a new day be made visible. There is much work for us to do together.

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III. Ecumenism, Liturgy, and Sacraments in the Twenty-Five Years since *Ut Unum Sint* Was Written

“The entire ecumenical liturgical conversation and dialogue is over—finished, dead, done.”²⁹

This was the sad and brokenhearted assessment of Horace Allen, a Presbyterian professor at Boston University who had devoted his career to ecumenical activities, in the wake of the Vatican’s document on liturgical translation, *Liturgiam Authenticam*, in 2001.

As we shall see, the ecumenical story of the liturgy and sacraments in the past twenty-five years since the publication of John Paul II’s encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* is very much a mixed bag. Although Allen’s assessment is pessimistic, to say the least, it would be unrealistic to begin this article in any other way. But that is not the whole story, so in what follows I will do three things. First, I will survey the liturgical/sacramental objectives promoted in the encyclical. Second, I will detail the positive moves toward ecumenical cooperation and reconciliation. And third, I will discuss the setbacks to ecumenism marked by several developments in the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁹ John L. Allen, Jr., “Liturgist Says Ecumenical Dialogue Is ‘Dead,’” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 24, 2002, http://www.natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2002b/052402/052402i.htm.