**THE REUILLY COMMON STATEMENT**

**AND DECLARATION**

**Document originally prepared for the**

**French Archdeaconry Synod in 2016**

**Background**

**The** end of the twentieth century saw major upheavals in political, social and economic life. As old orders fell away, the situation seemed fragile and of uncertain duration. At the same time due to travel and the new media people were in greater contact and meeting more frequently. Christians in Europe shared this new awareness and were encouraged afresh to seek for visible unity.

This search for closer ties had already begun before the Second World in the 1930s as shown by the Bonn Agreement which linked Anglicans and Old Catholics. The late 1980s and early1990s saw ecumenical dialogue and agreements being fostered between Anglican churches in the British Isles and Lutheran and Reformed churches on the Continent as demonstrated by the Meissen Agreement, concluded with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Porvoo Agreement, with Lutheran churches in Northern Europe.

When Archbishop Robert Runcie visited Strasbourg in 1989, the French Reformed and Lutheran Churches, expressed their desire to have closer fellowship with Anglican churches along the lines of the Meissen Agreement, Encouraged by the positive reception of the earlier agreements the Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland began a dialogue with the French Reformed and Lutheran Churches in 1992, which took place in the Reuilly Community of Protestant deaconesses in Versailles.

Contacts between the Anglican and French churches go back; to the Middle Ages, and were particularly strong at the Reformation when English religious refugees fled to France and Huguenots came to England. In the twentieth century, links between these churches were rekindled and in the nineteen sixties and seventies, the churches met together for a dialogue which had provided a clear basis for exploring the possibility for a closer formal relationship.

**The Reuilly Common Statement**

which hasthe following nine chapters

**Chapter 1 Setting the scene**, **with the history and present context of the participants**,

**Chapter ll The Church as Sign, Instrument and Foretaste of the Kingdom of God**

**Chapter lll The Church as Communion (*koinonia)***

**Chapter lV Growth towards Visible Unity**

**Chapter V Agreement in Faith**.

Ten areas of agreement on the fundamentals of the faith were covered: Scripture, the Creeds, justification and sanctification, the nature of the Church, worship and sacramental life, baptism and eucharist, the corporate priesthood of the whole people of God, ordered ministry and oversight exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways, and hope in the final consummation of the kingdom.

**Chapter Vl The Apostolicity of the Church and its ministry**. Differing models of oversight are considered, although apostolicity is seen as belonging to the whole Church. The responsibility of the ordained ministry is emphasised, together with the acknowledgement that Anglicans hold that the full visible unity of the Church includes the historic episcopal succession, a sign acknowledged by Lutherans and Reformed, but not as a necessary condition for full visible unity. Because of this difference, the churches are not yet ready to move to the full interchangeability of ministers The text states, however, that all our churches are in change and are in the process of considering the balance between the various dimensions of oversight (*episkope)*.

**Chapter Vll Next Steps**

The Churches state that they have found a high degree of unity and faith. and outline three areas of future work together which are defined as.

a) common efforts in witness and service;

b) continuing theological work,(particularly on questions of oversight, authority, eucharistic ministry and formally uniting our ministries);.

c) the practical consequences (of the Agreement: prayer, sharing of worship,partnership, joint ventures across a range of areas.)

**Chapter Vlll Joint Declaration**

This partnership is to progress on the basis of the **Reuilly Declaration** which **is** founded on the participating churches’ fundamental agreement on faith, their common understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church, and their convergence on the apostolicity of the Church and the ministry.

**Chapter lX Celebration and Wider Ecumenical Commitment**

The Common Statement was an important stage in the process of building the unity of Christ’s church. It makes a major contribution to (the) perception of the stages of mutual ‘recognition’ and ‘reconciliation’ of ministries and how these stages are differently seen in Anglicanism and the Reformed and Lutheran traditions. The process of clarification goes on in theological dialogues as the work of building the Kingdom together is enhanced by this agreement and commitment between the churches.”

**The Reuilly Declaration** *(in italics)*

This Declaration, based on Chapters VIII and IX of the Common Statement, acknowledges the positive elements which link the Churches and outlines their commitment to share a common life and mission. It was signed in July 2001 in both Canterbury and Paris and reads thus:.

*“We, the Church of the Augsburg Confession of Alsace and Lorraine, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of France, the Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine, the Reformed Church of France, the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church in Wales, on the basis of our fundamental agreement in faith, our common understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church, and our convergence on the apostolicity of the Church and the ministry contained in Chapters II-VI of the Reuilly Common Statement, make the following acknowledgements and commitments, which are interrelated.*

***Acknowledgements***

*(i) We acknowledge one another's churches as churches belonging to the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.*

*(ii) We acknowledge that in all our churches the word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist are duly administered.*

*(iii) We acknowledge that all our churches share in the common confession of the apostolic faith.*

*(iv) We acknowledge that one another's ordained ministries are given by God as instruments of grace for the mission and unity of the Church and for the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments.*

*(v) We acknowledge one another's ordained ministries as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit but also Christ's commission through the Church, and look forward to the time when the fuller visible unity of our churches makes possible the interchangeability of ministers.*

*(vi) We acknowledge that personal, collegial and communal oversight (episkope) is embodied and exercised in all our churches in a variety of forms, as a visible sign expressing and serving the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry*

***b Commitments***

*We commit ourselves to share a common life and mission. We will take steps to closer fellowship in as many areas of Christian life and witness as possible, so that all our members together may advance on the way to full visible unity As the next steps we agree:*

*(i) to seek appropriate ways to share a common life in mission and service, to pray for and with one another, and to work towards the sharing of spiritual and human resources;*

*(ii) to welcome one another's members to each other's worship and to receive pastoral ministrations;*

*(iii)to welcome one another's members into the congregational life of each other's churches;*

*(iv)to encourage shared worship. When eucharistic worship is judged to be appropriate, it may move beyond eucharistic hospitality for individuals. The participation of ordained ministers would reflect the presence of two or more churches expressing their closer unity in faith and baptism and demonstrate that we are still striving towards making more visible the unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Nevertheless, such participation still falls short of the full interchangeability of ministers. The rite should be that of the church to which the presiding minister belongs, and that minister should say the eucharistic prayer.*

*Note: In such celebrations each church should respect the practices and piety of the others and reflect the emerging ecumenical consensus with regard to the celebration of the eucharist. The celebration will include the prayer of thanksgiving, the words of Christ's institution and the making of the memorial of his sacrifice; the invocation of the Holy Spirit; intercession for the Church and the world and the proclamation of God's kingdom. Ecumenical sensitivity and mutual respect demand that the eucharistic elements are treated reverently after the celebration. The minister who presides at such an ecumenical celebration is an ordained pastor, presbyter or bishop. Concelebration is not envisaged.*

*(v) to welcome ordained ministers of our churches to serve in each other's churches, in accordance with the discipline of our respective churches, to the extent made possible by our agreement;*

*(vi)to continue theological discussions between our churches to work on the outstanding issues hindering fuller communion, whether bilaterally or in a wider European, ecumenical framework;*

*(vii)to work towards closer relations between ourselves in diaspora situations;*

*(viii) to encourage ecumenical visits, twinnings and exchanges;*

*(ix)to establish a contact group to nurture our growth in communion, to facilitate regular consultation on significant matters, and to co-ordinate the implementation of this agreement.*

***IX Celebration and Wider Ecumenical Commitment***

***A Celebration***

*The Declaration will come into force when it is accepted by two participating churches of different traditions according to their own processes. We recommend that our churches express in worship their commitment to share a common life and mission and to continue to strive for the full visible unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.*

***B Wider Ecumenical Commitment***

*We rejoice in this agreement and see in it a step towards the visible unity which all churches committed to the ecumenical movement seek to manifest. We regard our move to closer communion as part of the pursuit of a wider unity, embracing more and more churches of different traditions.*

*This pursuit will involve the following:*

*strengthening the links which each of our churches has with other churches at local, national and international levels;*

*deepening relationships within and between our three world communions and supporting efforts towards closer communion between Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe and in those parts of the world where good relations between our church*

*families already exist;*

*developing further existing links with other world communions, especially those with whom we have ecumenical dialogue and agreements;*

*supporting together our local, national and regional ecumenical councils, the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.*

*The common inheritance and common calling of our churches, spelt out in this agreement, makes us conscious of our obligation to contribute jointly to the ecumenical efforts of others. At the same time we are aware of our own need to be enriched by the insights and experience of churches of other traditions and in other parts of the world. Together with them we are ready to be used by God as instruments of his saving and reconciling purpose for all humanity and creation.”*

**Since then**

There has been of late a renewed interest in the Reuilly Declaration, both in our Archdeaconry and Diocese and the Church of England. Until now the Reuilly Contact Group has met about every two years in order to further the development of relationships between the signatory churches. The current co-Chairs are John Stroyan, Bishop of Warwick, and the Rev’d Christian Krieger (President of the Eglise Reformée d’Alsace et de Lorraine and Vice-President of the Union des Eglises Protestantes d’Alsace et de Lorraine).

Concern has sometimes been expressed that the practical results of the Reuilly Common Statement and Declaration have not been as substantial as might have been hoped. Recently Archbishop Justin Welby (who it will be recalled had lived in France for several years) asked Bishop Stroyan to lead efforts to revitalise the Reuilly relationships. Last year (2015) Bishop Stroyan visited Paris and Strasbourg and held discussions with representatives of the signatory Protestant churches and the Anglican Archdeaconry of France.

It must also be recalled that the structure of the French Protestant churches in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions has changed in recent years with the Reformed and Lutheran churches uniting in a single body known as the Eglise Protestante Unie de France. The Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Alsace maintain their separate legal identity but work together for most purposes as the Union des Eglises Protestantes d’Alsace and de Lorraine.