

Renewing the Anglican Eucharist

Findings of the Fifth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Dublin, Eire, 1995

Principles and Recommendations Adopted by the whole Consultation

1. In the celebration of the eucharist, all the baptised are called to participate in the great sign of our common identity as people of God, the body of Christ, and the community of the Holy Spirit. No baptized person should be excluded from participating in the eucharistic assembly on such grounds as age, race, gender, economic circumstances or mental capacity.
2. In the future, Anglican unity will find its liturgical expression not so much in uniform texts as in a common approach to eucharistic celebration and a structure which will ensure a balance of word, prayer, and sacrament, and which bears witness to the catholic calling of the Anglican communion.
3. The eucharistic action models the way in which God as redeemer comes into the world in the Word made flesh, to which the people of God respond by offering themselves – broken individuals – to be made one body in Christ's risen life. This continual process of transformation is enacted in each celebration.
4. The sacrificial character of all Christian life and worship must be articulated in a way that does not blur the unique atoning work of Christ. Vivid language, symbol, and metaphor engage human memory and assist the eucharistic action in forming the life of the community.
5. In the eucharist, we encounter the mystery of the triune God in the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacrament. The fundamental character of the eucharistic prayer is thanksgiving and the whole eucharistic prayer should be seen as consecratory. The elements of memorial and invocation are caught up within the movement of thanksgiving.
6. In, and through, and with Christ, the assembly is the celebrant of the eucharist. Among other tasks it is appropriate for lay persons to play their part in proclaiming the word, leading the prayers of the people, and distributing communion. The liturgical function and pastoral oversight tends to reduce liturgical presidency to an isolated ritual function.
7. The embodied character of Christian worship must be honoured in proclamation, music, symbol and ritual. If inculturation is to be taken seriously, local culture and custom which are not in conflict with the Gospel must be reflected in the liturgy, interacting with the accumulated inculturation of the tradition.
8. The church needs leaders who are themselves open to renewal and are able to facilitate and enable it in community. This should affect the liturgical formation of laity and clergy, especially bishops as leaders of the local community. Such continuing formation is a priority and adequate resources for it should be provided in every Province.
9. Celebrating the eucharist involves both reaffirming the baptismal commitment to die to self and be raised to newness of life, and embodying that vision of the kingdom in searching for justice, reconciliation and peace in the community. The Spirit who calls us into one body in Christ equips and sends us out to live this divine life.

Group Statements

I. Eucharistic Theology

A. *The Doctrine of the Trinity*

1. Central to the Christian Faith is the revelation of the Triune God of love. All Christian worship is the work of God the Holy Trinity, who enables human beings, made in God's image, to return thanks and praise. Eucharistic theology, however, is often discussed as though it were simply a Christological, or at best, a 'binitarian' issue.
2. Eucharistic worship reflects our status as created beings using bread and wine, fruits of God's creation, to realize our status as those redeemed, baptized in the three-fold Name and as Christ's body animated by the Holy Spirit. All three Persons of the Trinity are properly to be acknowledged throughout the eucharistic celebration. Similarly, eucharistic theology should be seen within the wider context of Trinitarian theology.
3. The eucharist celebrates the Father's bestowing of divine grace on the community of believers in the Church through the combined ('perichoretic') interaction of the Son and the Spirit. Through the Son, the Church knows God as Father and knows God as creator and gives thanks for creation. It gives thanks for the incarnation and redemption through the Son and rejoices in its sanctification and recreation by the Spirit.
4. To participate in the eucharist is incarnational. It involves a bodily response, both corporately and individually. It is with our hands and mouths that we take, eat and drink the sacramental signs of the body and blood of Christ. The eucharistic bread and wine are offered to us to be eaten and drunk so that Christ may dwell in us. When Christ 'shares his bread with sinners' we praise God for the fuller revelation each new participation brings us. Our devotion and love thus engendered and nourished are evidence of the Spirit's joyful moving in us.
5. It is the Triune God whose presence and fellowship we have when we take, eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. When in the eucharist we make the memorial (anamnesis) of the one sacrifice of Christ, it is none other than the self-giving love of the Trinity which is proclaimed and experienced.
6. The Western eucharistic rites have not always given full expression to our Trinitarian faith. The classical forms of the eucharistic prayer in the East have an explicitly Trinitarian structure which became lost in the West. It is not found in the Roman Canon, nor was it part of the awareness of most of the Reformers. More recently, we have returned to the pre-Cappadocian custom of addressing the eucharistic prayer.
7. There is a strong case not only for continuing the present trend of giving an explicitly Trinitarian structure to the eucharistic prayer, but for making explicit in at least some new prayers the equality of being of the three Persons. The grace as the opening greeting or the beginning of the Sursum Corda; a Trinitarian form of absolution; post-communion prayers and solemn three-fold blessings are examples of where this may be achieved.
8. This could be further achieved by including devotional prayers and hymns which are addressed to Christ and to the Holy Spirit, such as the Veni Creator, 'Be present, be present O Jesus...' (CSI) and the Agnus Dei. In much recent liturgical revision such devotional prayers have been discouraged. However, in many parts of the Anglican

Communion the laity regard such devotions as extremely important in expressing deeply felt spiritual needs and beliefs.

9. The restoration of a Trinitarian structure for the eucharistic prayer in historic as well as contemporary Anglican texts has included the restoration of an invocation (epiclesis) of the Holy Spirit. Modern scholarship understands the 'deep structures' of the prayer to embrace thanksgiving and supplication. In the Jewish models from which the Christian prayers grew, the supplication is for the restoration of Jerusalem of the future of Israel. In early Christian prayers this becomes prayer for the gathering of the Church into the Kingdom. The link between this eschatological perspective and the work of the Spirit is made explicit in Romans 8. In Christian prayer, therefore, the supplication became an explicit invocation of the Holy Spirit. The epiclesis later came to be interpreted as an invocation upon the elements of bread and wine or upon the communicants of both, but it is better understood in its earliest forms as invoking the Spirit upon the whole life of God's people as expressed in the eucharistic action. Difficulties which many Anglicans have felt