
Kyrkomötet
Kyrkostyrelsens skrivelse 2015:4

**Ekumenisk överenskommelse mellan Svenska kyrkan
och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen**

Kyrkostyrelsen överlämnar denna skrivelse till kyrkomötet.

Uppsala den 11 juni 2015

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Skrivelsens huvudsakliga innehåll

I skrivelsen föreslås att en ekumenisk överenskommelse ingås mellan Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen. Förslaget innebär huvudsakligen

- ◆ att medlemmarna i de båda kyrkorna välkomnas i den andra kyrkan att ta del i gudstjänst- och församlingsliv,
- ◆ att kyrkorna erkänner varandras ämbeten och att präster kan tjänstgöra i den andra kyrkan utan reordination,
- ◆ att biskopar inbjuds till biskopsvigningar och att delta i handpåläggning.

Överenskommelsen bygger på en genomgång av kyrkornas olika teologiska ståndpunkter och insikten att båda kyrkorna är delar av den enda, heliga, allmänliga och apostoliska kyrkan.¹

En samtalsdelegation har på de båda kyrkornas uppdrag under perioden 2005–2013 tagit fram en rapport som belyser kyrkornas historia och karaktär, teologiska ståndpunkter och kyrkoliv. Särskilt har frågor omkring kyrkans kännetecken i den nicenska trosbekännelsen diskuterats. Vidare har frågor om kyrkans sakramentalitet och biskopsämbetet bearbetats. Rapporten *Utrecht and Uppsala on the Way to Communion* (2013) biläggs denna skrivelse.

Överenskommelsen formuleras på två nivåer. Den första nivån avser kyrkornas erkännande av varandra. Den andra nivån handlar om att de båda kyrkorna förbinder sig att på olika sätt gestalta den enhet de har funnit med varandra.

Efter det att överenskommelsen har antagits av kyrkornas beslutande organ kommer den att manifesteras vid särskilda högtidsgudstjänster.

¹ I denna skrivelse används båda orden katolsk och allmänlig som synonymer.

Innehåll

Skrivelsens huvudsakliga innehåll.....	1
Kyrkostyrelsens förslag till kyrkomötesbeslut.....	3
Samtalsrapporten <i>Utrecht and Uppsala on the Way to Communion</i>	3
Inledning och bakgrund	3
De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna	4
Svenska kyrkan	6
En gemensam vision om kyrkan.....	7
Ytterligare frågeställningar	11
Rekommendationer	12
Remissinstanserna.....	13
Kyrkostyrelsens överväganden och förslag	14
Teologiska frågeställningar.....	14
Överenskommelsens förslag.....	19
Kyrkorättsliga konsekvenser.....	20
Ekumeniska konsekvenser	21
Barnkonsekvensanalys.....	22
Utdrag ur kyrkostyrelsens protokoll.....	23
Bilaga 1. Utrecht and Uppsala on the Way to Communion	25

1. Kyrkomötet beslutar att Svenska kyrkan ingår en ekumenisk överenskommelse med de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen i enlighet med framlagt förslag.
2. Kyrkomötet beslutar att den ekumeniska överenskommelsen träder i kraft sedan de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen för sin del fattat beslut att ingå den ekumeniska överenskommelsen med Svenska kyrkan.

Samtalsrapporten *Utrecht and Uppsala on the Way to Communion*

Inledning och bakgrund

Det utarbetade förslaget till en ekumenisk överenskommelse med de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen är resultatet av en åtta år lång dialog. I dialogen har teologiska likheter och skillnader liksom grunderna för kyrkolivet i de båda kyrkorna klarlagts. Rapporten innehåller därför avsnitt om kyrkornas ekumeniska relationer, kyrkornas självförståelse, deras episkopala och synodala karaktär liksom en genomgång av Kyrkans kännetecken: en, helig, allmänlig och apostolisk. Vidare behandlas synen på biskopsämbetet och den apostoliska successionen och på vilket sätt överenskommelsen påverkar andra ekumeniska relationer. Rapporten är på engelska men sammanfattas nedan i sina huvuddrag.

Kontakterna mellan de båda kyrkorna var under 1900-talet av mer tillfällig karaktär. Vid den konferens, *Wider Episcopal Fellowship*, till vilken ärkebiskopen av Canterbury 1964 inbjöd biskopar från kyrkor utanför den anglikanska kyrkofamiljen men med den apostoliska successionen, mötte ärkebiskop Gunnar Hultgren den dåvarande ärkebiskopen i Utrecht Andreas Rinkel. Tillsammans med ärkebiskopen av Canterbury Michael Ramsey föreläste Hultgren och Rinkel om sina kyrkors syn på biskopsämbetet. Vid denna konferens fanns även representanter från den Filippinska oberoende kyrkan (*Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, IFI).

De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen och Engelska kyrkan hade redan 1931 nått en ekumenisk överenskommelse med ömsesidigt erkännande av varandra vilken senare kom att omfatta även övriga provinser inom den anglikanska kyrkan. 1965 inkluderades även de anglikanska kyrkorna i Spanien och Portugal och IFI. Eftersom även Svenska kyrkan hade nära relationer med IFI genom det arbete som utfördes inom Svenska kyrkans mission var det naturligt att knyta närmare förbindelser även med Svenska kyrkan. Kyrkomötet beslöt 1994 om en ekumenisk överenskommelse med IFI. Svenska kyrkan hade även nära förbindelser med de anglikanska kyrkorna, senast genom Borgåöverenskommelsen som antogs 1992 och som innebar att även de övriga anglikanska kyrkorna på de brittiska och iriska öarna, senare även dem i Portugal och Spanien, innefattades i gemensamma erkännanden.

Det fanns sålunda många ekumeniska beröringspunkter mellan Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna; båda hade ekumeniska överenskommelser med de anglikanska kyrkorna och med IFI.

Sedan ärkebiskopen av Utrecht Joris Vercammen deltagit i en biskopsvigning i Uppsala 2003 föreslog han att en officiell dialog skulle upprättas. Dialogen inleddes 2005 och samtalsdelegationen avslutade sitt arbete 2013 med förslag om en ekumenisk överenskommelse.

De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna

Det finns ett flertal gammalkatolska kyrkor över världen. Sju av dem är förenade i Utrechtunionen, nämligen de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna i Nederländerna, Tyskland, Schweiz, Österrike, Tjeckien, Kroatien och Polen. Det finns även mindre grupper i Frankrike och Sverige/Danmark. Dessa senare räknas inte som medlemskyrkor i Utrechtunionen men står under tillsyn av en biskop från någon av medlemskyrkorna. Den sammanlagda anslutningen ligger runt 65 000 medlemmar.²

Det finns även andra gammalkatolska kyrkor, till exempel i USA, som inte är medlemmar i unionen. IFI bröt även den upp från den romersk-katolska kyrkan och delar därmed bakgrund med de gammalkatolska kyrkorna men identifierar sig inte som gammalkatolsk.

De gammalkatolska kyrkorna har det gemensamt att de lämnat den romersk-katolska kyrkan, men av delvis olika anledningar. Katolska kyrkan i Nederländerna, som under det kalvinska styret inte hade full frihet och därför betraktades av Rom som ett missionsområde, hävdade i början av 1700-talet att den inte skulle stå under direkt styre från Rom utan ha egen biskop i enlighet med dess gamla rättigheter. Detta accepterades inte av påven vilket ledde till en brytning och en ärkebiskop av Utrecht valdes och vigdes.

I Tyskland, Schweiz och Österrike var det Första Vatikankonciliet beslut 1870 om påvens ofelbarhet och hans universella jurisdiktion i kyrkan som åstadkom brytningen. Gammalkatolikerna exkommunicerades då de inte accepterade de nyproklamerade dogmerna. Den centralistiska tendens som fanns inom ultramontanismen ville utöka påvens makt på bekostnad av en konciliär syn, där makten skulle ligga hos biskoparna tillsammans. De gammalkatolska kyrkor som hade slaviskt ursprung uppstod i konflikt omkring en önskan att ha en bestämd etnisk och nationell identitet inom den romersk-katolska kyrkan, vilket Rom inte godkände.

Utrechtunionen bildades 1889 mellan holländska, tyska och schweiziska biskopar som deklarerade att deras kyrkor var i full gemenskap med varandra. Vid sekelskiftet runt 1900 inträdde även de kyrkor som hade slaviskt ursprung i unionen. Unionen ser sig ligga nära anglikansk ecklesiologi men även, efter omfattande ekumeniska samtal, med ortodox kyrkosyn. Den har flera institutioner för utbildning och teologisk reflektion.

Bärande tankar om den gammalkatolska kyrkan formulerades redan på 1870-talet. De handlar om protest, reform och återförening. Protesterna avsåg centraliseringstendenserna inom den romersk-katolska kyrkan. I Tyskland var också den katolska upplysningen, som försökte förena förnuftet med tanken på uppenbarelsen, av stor betydelse för gammalkatolikerna liksom inriktningen mot parlamentarisk demokrati. Den förnyelse som andra Vatikankonciliet innebar för den romersk-katolska kyrkan har dock mildrat det anti-romerska draget. En reform som genomförts under 1990-talet är prästvigning av kvinnor; utgångspunkten för ställningstagandet var att Guds Son antog mänsklig natur, inte specifikt manlig. Upplösningen av samhällets patriarkala karaktär ledde till reflektion och en djupare förståelse av sanningen vilket förde med sig beslut att öppna ämbetet för kvinnor.

Även på ett annat plan skiljer sig de gammalkatolska kyrkorna från den romersk-katolska kyrkan då de använde folkspråket för gudstjänsten och inte latin. Vidare har de en episkopal-synodal organisation. Lekmän deltar i liturgin och i kyrkans styrelse.

² Det finns även kyrkor som identifierar sig som gammalkatolska men inte erkänns eller hör till Utrechtunionen, till exempel den Nordisk-katolska kyrkan i Sverige.

Dessutom avskaffades celibatet och seden med bikt före nattvardsdeltagande. Dessa förändringar genomfördes vid olika tidpunkter i unionens medlemskyrkor och är något som nu förenar dem.

De olika medlemskyrkorna inom unionen skiljer sig åt och har inte någon gemensam kyrkoförfattning. Så kan till exempel synodmedlemmarna ha beslutande eller rådgivande funktioner och biskopen väljas av präster och lekmän eller bara av präster. Unionens uppgift är att hålla samman de gammalkatolska kyrkorna och att verka för enhet, trots att det finns skillnader mellan dem. Särskilt framgångsrikt har det varit inom liturgins område, såsom utarbetandet av en gemensam nattvardsbön och en gemensam ordning för vigning till diakon, präst och biskop.

Unionens grunddokument

1889 fastställde de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna sina gemensamma dokument. *Utrechtdeklarationen* angav de teologiska principerna. Dessa byggde på den äldsta kyrkans tro och ordningar. De innehöll även förnekande av dogmerna 1854 om Marie obefläckade avlelse och 1870 om påvens ställning och ofelbarhet. Den innehöll även en förpliktelse att verka för kyrkans enhet på denna grund. *Utrechtöverenskommelsen* beskrev de ingående kyrkornas gemenskap och vissa regler för hur denna skulle kunna upprätthållas. *Regelverket* fastställde ordningen för den internationella biskopskonferensen, vilken samlas regelbundet under ordförandeskap av ärkebiskopen i Utrecht. Deklarationen har aldrig ändrats medan de två andra har setts igenom och 2000 formulerats i *Statute of the Old Catholic Bishops in the Union of Utrecht*. Denna innehåller även de teologiska principerna för de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna.

Episkopal och synodal

De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna har en synodal struktur. Varje kyrka har en synod som består av valda lekmän från alla församlingar och av alla eller av valda präster. Hur de synodala organen ordnats skiftar dock mellan kyrkorna; synoden och synodens styrelse kan vara olika sammansatt och ha skilda funktioner. Avsikten är dock i alla kyrkorna att lekmän tillsammans med kyrkans ämbete ska verka i de olika organen.

Biskoparna har en dubbel tillhörighet och ett dubbelt ansvar. De är valda synodalt i den lokala kyrkan och hör därmed till denna. Vid sin vigning blir de medlemmar i den internationella biskopskonferensen, som även den har synodal karaktär och är det institutionella uttrycket för de Gammalkatolska kyrkornas enhet. Där verkar de som sina kyrkors representanter.

För de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna är det treledade ämbetet med biskop, präst och diakon en bindande ordning. Traditionen har lett till att dessa kyrkor endast har ett diakonat på väg till prästvigning, ett så kallat trappstegsdiakoniat. Ett permanent diakonat inrättades dock från 1980-talet; diskussionen om dess uppgifter och plats i kyrkan pågår fortfarande.

Den internationella biskopskonferensen har flera uppgifter. Det gäller unionens gemensamma projekt och att upprätthålla gemenskapen; det gäller kontroversiella trosfrågor och etiska frågor. Biskopskonferensen har också uppgiften att göra uttalanden för unionen och att svara för relationerna till andra kyrkor samt att fatta beslut om kyrkors inträde i unionen. Biskoparna gör detta som representanter för sina kyrkor, vilket medför att frågorna förs mellan och inom kyrkorna i en dubbelriktad process innan något avgörande sker. Biskopskonferensen och unionen som sådan delar gemensamma förpliktelser men den är inte ett super-stift över

kyrkorna. Det finns även andra gemensamma organ som en internationell kongress, som samlas vart fjärde år, och en internationell teologkonferens.

Ekumeniska förbindelser

Förbindelser med de ortodoxa kyrkorna etablerades på 1870-talet. Dessa hade brutit med västkyrkan 1054 och accepterade inte påvens primat över hela kyrkan. Förhoppningar fanns om att gå in i en liknande överenskommelse som med anglikanerna. En dialog med de ortodoxa kyrkorna resulterade under ett decennium från 1975 i sex olika dokument om samförstånd. Någon kyrkogemenskap upprättades dock inte. Ett hinder för en sådan är gemenskapen med de anglikanska kyrkorna, ett annat att öppna ämbetet för kvinnor.

När det gäller den romersk-katolska kyrkan har det polemiska i relationen klingat av sedan tiden för det andra Vatikanconciliet 1962–1965 då de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna var inbjudna som observatörer. Efter en del dialoger på nationell nivå verkade en samtalsgrupp från 2003 mellan Vatikanen och Utrechtunionen vars rapport för närvarande diskuteras. Det finns fortfarande hinder för gemenskap såsom frågan om påvens primat i en världsvid gemenskap av lokala kyrkor liksom Mariadogmerna från 1854 och 1950 (Marie obefläckade avlelse samt Marie himmelsfärd) samt ordinationen av kvinnor till kyrkans vigningstjänst.

När det gäller de lutherska kyrkorna är dialogen med Svenska kyrkan den första med en kyrka som hör till de reformatoriska kyrkorna. De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna betraktar den anglikanska kyrkotraditionen från ett anglo-katolskt perspektiv och ser den efter sin reformation som i allt väsentligt katolsk.

De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna har varit verksamma inom Kyrkornas världsråd (KV) sedan dess start 1948. De två kyrkodokumenterna *Dop*, *Nattvard*, *Ämbete* (1982) och *Kyrkan – på väg mot en gemensam vision* (2012) har tagits väl emot. De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna är också medlemmar av Europeiska kyrkokonferensen.

De ekumeniska förbindelserna med de anglikanska kyrkorna har redan berörts i denna sammanställning.

Gammalkatolskt kyrkoliv

När de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna presenteras i samtalsdelegationens rapport görs detta under tre huvudord: de är gudstjänstfirande, de vittnar och de tjänar. Mässa firas varje söndag och gudstjänstordningen hör till västkyrkornas rit med tre textläsningar och predikan. Församlingarna har olika grupper för samtal om kristen tro eller sociala frågor. I städerna finns många medlemmar som inte kommer från traditionellt gammalkatolska familjer. De olika kyrkorna har också diakonala projekt, en del av dem med internationell prägel. Kyrkorna hoppas att de ska kunna lära sig om det permanenta diakonatet från Svenska kyrkan.

Svenska kyrkan

Rapporten gör även en introduktion till Svenska kyrkan. Här anges bara några punkter i denna presentation; i övrigt hänvisas till samtalsdelegationens rapport.

I presentationen orienteras om Svenska kyrkans historiska bakgrund, det medeltida ursprunget liksom reformationstidevarvets förändringar. Enhetssamhällets upphörande och den ökande pluralismen under 1900-talet lyfts fram liksom utvecklingen mot en kyrka med ändrade relationer till staten.

Rapporten beskriver vidare Svenska kyrkan i enlighet med lagen om Svenska kyrkan som en evangelisk-luthersk rikstäckande, öppen folkkyrka, demokratiskt uppbyggd. Kyrkoordningens portalparagraf beskriver hur Svenska kyrkan ser på sin tro, bekännelse och lära och hur den gestaltas i gudstjänst och liv, är grundad i Guds ord, sammanfattad i de ekumeniska symbola och den Augsburgska bekännelsen och bejakad vid Uppsala mötes beslut 1593 samt förklaras och kommenteras i Konkordieboken och andra bejakade dokument.

Svenska kyrkan har en synodal struktur på alla nivåer; denna består av valda ledamöter och representanter för vinningstjänsten med *ex officio*-ställning i kyrkostyrelse, stiftsstyrelse och kyrkoråd. Vinningstjänsten inom Svenska kyrkan är treledad: biskop, präst och diakon. Den är öppen för både kvinnor och män. Diakonen har ett specifikt uppdrag med sociala och karitativa uppgifter och diakonvigningen är inte en vinning på väg till prästämbetet.

Svenska kyrkan är ekumeniskt aktiv och starkt engagerad inom KV och KEK. Relationen och gemenskapen med Engelska kyrkan går tillbaka till tidigt 1900-tal med en ekumenisk överenskommelse från 1922. Genom Borgåöverenskommelsen vidgades gemenskapen till de anglikanska kyrkorna på de brittiska och iriska öarna.

Genom sitt medlemskap i Lutherska världsförbundet (LVF) deltog Svenska kyrkan i antagandet av den gemensamma deklARATIONEN om rättfärdiggörelsen som utarbetats mellan LVF och det påvliga rådet för kristen enhet.³ En period av dialoger mellan Svenska kyrkan och Stockholms katolska stift hade resulterat i några rapporter och 1989, när påven Johannes Paulus II besökte Sverige, inleddes en tioårsperiod med goda relationer. Bland annat firades några ekumeniska vesprar i S:t Peterskyrkan i Rom med deltagande av påven och ärkebiskoparna av Uppsala och Åbo.

Samtalsrapporten nämner vidare de många goda förbindelser som finns mellan Svenska kyrkan och andra lutherska kyrkor, inte minst kyrkorna på de forna missionsfälten i Asien och Afrika.

På samma sätt som de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna beskrivs Svenska kyrkan som en gudstjänstfirande kyrka, en kyrka som vittnar och en tjänande kyrka.

En gemensam vision om kyrkan

Med hänvisning till den ekumeniska rapporten *Kyrkan – på väg mot en gemensam vision*, som getts ut av Kyrkornas världsråd för samtal om kyrkans väsen och uppgift, talar samtalsrapporten om två överskuggande perspektiv: kyrkan är ett mysterium och den är ett tecken, med andra ord ett sakrament för världen.⁴ Kyrkan är både en gåva från Gud och en uppgift att förverkliga.

Kyrkan är främst ett Guds mysterium. Som sådan har den en sakramental karaktär då den är ett redskap för Guds kärlek och barmhärtighet mot världen. Guds kärlek fulländas i Kristus, som själv kan kallas ur-sakramentet.

Men kyrkan är också en mänsklig konstruktion, en institution med sin egen karaktär och sina egna uttryck. Kyrkan som mänsklig institution är inte fri från synd och därför behöver den ständigt Guds nåd och förlåtelse.

3 Persson & Hallonsten, – att i allt bekänna Kristus. Den gemensamma deklARATIONEN om rättfärdiggörelseläran: tillkomst, texter, kommentarer, Stockholm 1991.

4 Kyrkan – på väg mot en gemensam vision. Ekumeniskt samtal om kyrkans väsen och uppgift. Sveriges kristna råds skriftserie nr 21, Bromma 2014. Artiklarna 25–27.

Det finns en ambivalens i kyrkan; å ena sidan är den dold och ett föremål för tron. Å andra sidan är den synlig och föremål för forskning och praktiska åtgärder. Denna dubbeltydighet påverkar hur vi ser på kyrkan. Fenomenologiskt kan kyrkan ses som söndrad i olika konfessioner och skilda gemenskaper. Samtidigt går det inte att vara säker på vem som verkligen hör till kyrkan utan det står klart först vid Kristi återkomst.

Kyrkan är en och helig

Den nicenska trosbekännelsen innehåller fyra kännetecken för kyrkan: en, helig, katolsk (allmännelig) och apostolisk, det som kallas *notæ ecclesiae*.

Kyrkan är *en* och *helig* därför att den ende och helige Guden är kyrkans grund och mål, med fulländning i Guds rike. Denna enhet och helighet manifesteras i gudstjänsten då den ende Kristus förkunnas genom evangeliet och ges i nattvarens bröd och vin. De som tar emot honom blir vad de redan är, en social kropp, Kristi kropp. Kyrkan som Kristi kropp är en gemenskap av människor som förenas av det de tar emot, Kristus i ord och sakrament.

Varje medlem kallas genom dopet till ett liv i helighet. Dop och tro hör samman och är det första steget på ett sakramentalt liv som leder fram till det fulla inlemmandet i Kristi kropp i nattvarden.

Den Kristus som tas emot i nattvarden är ingen annan än Jesus från Nasaret som kom med budskapet om Guds rike. Mottagandet av evangeliet ska leda till ett liv i helgelse och till att kyrkans medlemmar blir aktiva i sitt vittnesbörd om Guds nåd.

Enheten är en gåva från Gud. Samtidigt är det alla döptas ansvar att bevara kyrkans enhet.

Kyrkan är allmännelig och apostolisk

Kyrkan som *allmännelig* eller *katolsk* (ordet betyder ursprungligen allomfattande eller universell och är ingen beteckning på någon särskild kyrka) talar om det som många har gemensamt i en pluralistisk verklighet. Den *enda* kyrkan som bekänns i trosbekännelsen kommer till uttryck i en mängd lokala kyrkor som lever i gemenskap med varandra. Den lokala kyrkan samlad i stiftet med sin biskop representerar och förverkligar den *enda* kyrkan på den lokala orten. Den äger inte sin katolicitet utan är katolsk bara i gemenskap med andra kyrkor. Denna teologiska identitet, som inte ska förväxlas med sociokulturell eller historisk identitet, pekar mot enhetens verkliga källa. Den världsvida gemenskapen mellan kristna och gemenskapen med andra kyrkor är en konsekvens av varje lokal kyrkas katolicitet.

Också *apostoliciteten* hör samman med den lokala kyrkan när den är i gemenskap med andra kyrkor. Apostolicitet står för kontinuiteten i tid och rum med Kristi och apostlarnas uppdrag. Det finns några yttre tecken på en sådan kontinuitet, som dock inte får ses isolerade från varandra. Ett är hur ämbetet förmedlas genom bön och handpåläggning genom tiderna, den apostoliska successionen, vilken är särskilt tydlig vid biskopsvigning. Biskopen väljs av den lokala kyrkan och hon eller han vigs av andra biskopar i gemenskap med den lokala kyrkan. Det har både en horisontell och en vertikal dimension. Horisontell genom den historiska kontinuiteten i de lokala kyrkornas gemenskap. Vertikal genom bönen om den Helige Ande vid vigningen. Den apostoliska successionen uttrycker främst hur kyrkan i apostolisk tradition fortsätter sin sändning.

Kyrkans lokala och världsvida karaktär

Både de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna och Svenska kyrkan har en synodal och episkopal struktur. Den lokala kyrkan, som det talats om tidigare, är det område som leds av en biskop. Biskopens och de andra kyrkomedlemmarnas inbördes förhållande tydliggörs i tillsynsuppdraget. Biskopen har ett personligt tillsynsuppdrag. De lokala prästerna har ett tillsynsuppdrag i sina församlingar medan alla medlemmar deltar i ett allmänt tillsynsuppdrag. Detta konkretiseras när de deltar i överläggningar och beslut i kyrkoråd eller stiftets synodala organ, oavsett vilken legal form detta har.

Den lokala församlingen lever ut sitt uppdrag i *leitourgia*, *martyria* och *diakonia*, det vill säga gudstjänstfirande i alla dess former, kyrkans undervisning av olika slag och hävdandet av evangeliets syn i sociala och politiska frågor. *Diakonia* innebär att kyrkan vårdar både människor och hela skapelsen. Den lokala församlingen representerar den enda, heliga, allmänliga och apostoliska kyrkan och det blir tydligt när den lever i synlig enhet, *koinonia*, med andra kyrkor.

Den regionala *koinonia* är en gemenskap av de lokala kyrkorna; de sträcker sig utanför sig själva mot en världsvid gemenskap. Men också den regionala nivån, stiftet, representerar den enda, heliga, katolska och apostoliska kyrkan som bekänns i trosbekännelsen. För att hålla samman den regionala nivån behövs lämpliga former för gemensamma beslut och överläggningar. För detta har biskopen ett särskilt ansvar. Det utövas tillsammans med andra medlemmar i den lokala kyrkan, lekmän och vigda. I Svenska kyrkan sker det i stiftsstyrelse och kyrkomöte. Det går inte att direkt jämföra de två kyrkornas strukturer, eftersom Utrechtunionens högsta beslutande organ består av biskopskonferensen. Dennes beslut måste dock dessförinnan ha ett lokalt godkännande från de olika stiftet och därför har konferensen en synodal karaktär.

Det som sagts om de regionala kyrkorna kan också i princip sägas om den världsvida kyrkan där kyrkornas ledare, primater, har uppgiften att verka tillsammans för kristen tro och när de tar ställning i aktuella frågor. En av de många kyrkornas ledare har det övergripande ansvaret för en sådan synodal process där de olika kyrkornas röster hörs. Frågan om vad sådant övergripande ansvar skulle kunna innebära har varit föremål för olika ekumeniska överläggningar.

Kyrkans sakramentalitet

Kyrkan har sänts i världen som ett uttryck för Guds kärlek i Kristus, inte i första hand som en institution. Det finns ett växande samförstånd mellan kyrkorna att kyrkan både i sin lokala och universella gestalt kan ses som ett tecken och ett verktyg för Gudsriket och som ett sakrament för världen. Kyrkan är ett sakrament för helande, försoning och förnyelse av hela skapelsen. Med sakrament brukar man förstå ett synligt element som används av Gud i frälsningssyfte. I dopet är det vatten, i nattvarden bröd och vin. Kyrkan som institution är inte i sig själv ett sakrament; hon blir det först genom att hon är med i gemenskapen med Fadern genom Anden. Betydelsen av ordet sakrament växlar således inom rapportens ram.⁵

Kyrkor har olika organisatoriska former. De skiljer sig också historiskt och kulturellt från varandra. Det sakramentala livet i kyrkorna skiljer sig också åt men som en nådens ström från Guds hjärta ger det näring och förenar alla troende i ett

⁵ Synen på kyrkan som sakrament är inte lika ursprunglig som sakramentsläran. Ibland poängteras snarare kyrkans sakramentalitet, det vill säga att den bär på samma kvaliteter som ett sakrament har.

gemensamt kärleksuppdrag. Denna grundläggande syn på kyrkans sakramentalitet kan kyrkorna dela även om sakramentsteologi och praxis delvis skiljer sig.

Sakramenten

De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna räknar med sju sakrament. Det är dopet, konfirmationen, nattvarden, bikten, de sjukas smörjelse, vigningen och äktenskapet. Av dessa har bikten blivit allt mer ovanlig. Vidare anses den episkopala ordningen med vigning av biskop vara helt nödvändig för kyrkan. I denna betydelse av sakrament finns således inte Kyrkan med. Någon specifik definition av vad som räknas som ett sakrament finns inte men det är klart att dop och nattvard är de två viktigaste sakramenten för de troende. Det finns även en medvetenhet om att det finns läroproblem med den västerländska sakramentsteologin, så som den fixerades på 1100-talet, med dess definition om vad som var ett sakrament.

Att lista nattvarden som ett sakrament bland de andra speglar inte de Gammalkatolska kyrkornas sakramentala ecklesiologi. För kyrkan på pilgrimsresa mot Gudsriket är nattvarden det viktigaste tecknet.

Inom Svenska kyrkan räknas sedan reformationen dop och nattvard som de två sakramenten; de instiftades av Jesus själv. Andra handlingar kan också vara redskap för Guds nåd, men räknas inte som sakrament enligt reformatorisk definition.

Vid andra handlingar, som konfirmation och vigsel, förekommer handpåläggning och bön om Helig Ande eller välsignelse. Vigningsgudstjänsterna följer samma mönster för de tre delarna av det treledade ämbetet: biskop, präst och diakon. Dessa handlingar kan sägas ha sakramental karaktär.

De skillnader som finns mellan de båda kyrkorna är dock inte kyrkoskiljande. Det finns differenser men på den grundläggande teologiska nivån och i det pastorala arbetet kan de förenas.

Den apostoliska traditionen och biskopsämbetet

Den apostoliska traditionen är ett uttryck för kyrkans apostolicitet; kyrkan är sänd i världen och bygger på apostlarnas tro. Kyrkans hela existens och enhet är att ha ”fogats in i den byggnad som har apostlarna och profeterna till grund och Kristus Jesus själv till hörnsten” (Ef 2:20). Att hålla fast vid denna tradition, att stå i kontinuitet med den, brukar kallas succession.

I den tidiga kyrkan hölls lärosuccession, biskopssuccessionen och hela kyrkans succession samman. Dessa åtskildes senare och man delade även upp biskopssuccessionen i biskopssätenas succession och handpåläggningens succession. I dag finns en ökande anslutning till att den apostoliska successionen härleder sig från kyrkans apostolicitet i alla dess dimensioner och att denna är ett grundläggande tecken för den allmänliga kyrkan; biskoparna är dettas tecken och instrument för att bevara enheten.

Vigningen av en biskop handlar om kyrkogemenskap. Den lokala kyrkan väljer biskopen. Detta är ett uttryck för att den enda, heliga, allmänliga kyrkan är i gemenskap med andra lokala kyrkor, vilket också visas när andra kyrkors biskopar deltar i vigningen och i nattvardsfirandet. Att biskopar från olika kyrkor deltar i vigningen är den tydliga signalen på att de har full gemenskap med varandra; biskopen är där som representant för sin lokala kyrka.

Den apostoliska successionen ska förstås i ljuset av den apostoliska tron och i det medansvar som finns i den lokala kyrkan. För den Gammalkatolska kyrkan är en

sådan bred förståelse av den apostoliska successionen en förutsättning för att etablera en synlig enhet.

Svenska kyrkan bevarade biskopsämbetet efter reformationen och hävdade dess ställning i kyrkoordningen från 1571. Sedan ärkebiskop Nathan Söderbloms tid har Svenska kyrkan sökt en vidare förståelse av handpåläggningsuccessionen, vilket också inneburit att denna erbjudits till kyrkor som saknat den för att markera kyrkornas gemenskap med varandra. Samtidigt har Svenska kyrkan inte ifrågasatt andra kyrkor som saknat successionen. Den har betraktats som en gåva och aldrig som ett ifrågasättande av de ämbeten som fanns inom de kyrkor som inte hade denna handpåläggningsuccession.⁶ Svenska kyrkan har också ingått ekumeniska överenskommelser med kyrkor som inte har denna succession.

Både de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna och Svenska kyrkan har bevarat den apostoliska successionen i den medeltida meningen, men de har också arbetat med att förstå denna ur ett bredare perspektiv så som den skissats ovan. Det finns skillnader mellan de båda kyrkorna i hur man vill uttrycka biskopsämbetet i apostolisk succession i dagens ekumeniska sammanhang, men det finns ett grundläggande samförstånd om dess innebörd.

Ytterligare frågeställningar

När de första gammalkatolska biskoparna förklarade sin kyrkas teologiska ståndpunkt framhöll de den äldsta kyrkans tro såsom den är formulerad i de ekumeniska trosbekännelserna (lat. *symbola*) och de dogmatiska besluten i den odelade kyrkan. Detta preciserades senare till kyrkomötena från 325 till 787. I stället för att tala om skrift och tradition som två olika storheter vill de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna se dessa som två uttryck av den enda apostoliska traditionen; denna tolkas i kyrkan och av kyrkan under Andens ledning. För Svenska kyrkans del hänvisar rapporten till kyrkoordningens portalparagraf i 1 kap. 1 § och dess beskrivning av Svenska kyrkans tro bekännelse och lära och dess betoning av skriften, trosbekännelserna och den augsburgska bekännelsen; skriften och senare tolkningar hålls samman.

När det gäller den nicenska trosbekännelsen har de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna inte kvar orden i den tredje artikeln om att Anden utgår från Fadern *och Sonen* (lat. *filioque*). Dessa ord, som enbart finns i den västerländska traditionen, har länge orsakat splittring med de ortodoxa kyrkorna och de gammalkatolska biskoparna har förklarat att de förkastar tolkningen att Anden utgår också från Sonen. I Svenska kyrkan däremot har denna fråga knappast varit aktuell, troligen för att den inte haft den ingående dialog med de ortodoxa samfunden som de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna haft. Det är tillåtet i Svenska kyrkan att i ekumeniska sammanhang med ortodoxa kyrkor utesluta dessa ord ur den nicenska trosbekännelsen.

De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna menar att överenskommelser om eukaristisk gästfrihet på ett övergripande plan egentligen motsäger deras syn på kyrkogemenskap. Eukaristisk gästfrihet innebär att kyrkornas medlemmar får ta emot nattvarden i en annan kyrka även om dessa inte har någon ekumenisk överenskommelse om kyrkogemenskap. Det är inte, hävdar gammalkatolikerna, bara enhet om olika delar som dop, nattvard eller ämbete som är grund för kyrkogemenskap utan snarare en gemensam förståelse av kyrkan som gemenskap; det är bara så de enskilda delarna får sin rätta plats i det mysterium som kyrkan är.

6 Se Borgåöverenskommelsen, nordisk Ekumenisk skriftserie 29, Uppsala 1993, art 53.

De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna har dock ett undantag från detta. Med Tysklands evangeliska kyrka (EKD) finns ett avtal om eukaristisk gästfrihet. Dessa principer avser alltså kyrkornas inbördes relationer, inte den enskilde medlemmens agerande vid besök i andra kyrkor, vilket ligger på en annan nivå. I Svenska kyrkan är nattvardsbordet öppet för alla döpta från andra samfund och den eukaristiska gästfriheten är helt accepterad.

Båda kyrkorna konstaterar att en ekumenisk överenskommelse om gemenskap med en kyrka inte förs över till andra kyrkor med vilka de har ingått andra avtal. Så täcker till exempel inte de Gammalkatolska kyrkornas överenskommelser med den anglikanska kyrkogemenskapen de lutherska kyrkor som ingår i Borgåöverenskommelsen. En fråga av denna karaktär löses dock genom en överenskommelse mellan Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna, nämligen gemenskapen med IFI, med vilken båda kyrkorna var för sig har överenskommelser.

Det noteras att allteftersom kyrkor ingår ekumeniska överenskommelser med varandra blir frågorna om hur dessa hänger samman med varandra mer komplicerade och kräver fortsatta överväganden.

Rekommendationer

Rekommendationen har följande lydelse i svensk översättning.

Vi erkänner

- (i) att vardera kyrkan förverkligar Jesu Kristi enda, heliga, allmänneliga (katolska) och apostoliska kyrka
- (ii) att skilda traditioner i våra kyrkor, vare sig de är strukturella, liturgiska, teologiska eller läromässiga, inte hindrar dem från att vara del av fortsättningen av den apostoliska traditionen genom århundradena, utan ger uttryck åt en grundläggande enhet i mångfald som kan fördjupas i en framtida gemenskap,
- (iii) att de båda kyrkorna har ett rikt liturgiskt och eukaristiskt liv, en obruten episkopal struktur, en djup förbundenhet till kyrkans synliga enhet och därför till den ekumeniska rörelsen, och en öppen och kritisk attityd till samhällets värdeförändringar,
- (iv) att det finns en fast grund, både andlig och institutionell, som möjliggör framtida relationer mellan våra kyrkor och att vår gemensamma tro och vårt samfälliga uppdrag erbjuder möjligheter att stödja varandra, i Europa eller på andra kontinenter genom våra gemensamma kontakter.

Vi rekommenderar Svenska kyrkan och kyrkorna i Utrechtunionen att förplikta sig till

- (v) att betrakta döpta medlemmar av alla dessa kyrkor som medlemmar i den egna kyrkan i enlighet med gällande bestämmelser,
- (vi) att välkomna varandras medlemmar att ta emot sakramenten och annan pastoralvård,
- (vii) att dela ett gemensamt liv i mission och tjänst, att be för och med varandra och att dela resurser,
- (viii) att välkomna personer som är vigda i Svenska kyrkan eller i någon av kyrkorna inom Utrechtunionen att på inbjudan och utan reordination tjänstgöra i någon av våra kyrkor, i enlighet med de bestämmelser som gäller i den mottagande kyrkan,

- (ix) att inbjuda varandras biskopar att delta i handpåläggning vid biskopsvigningar,
- (x) att uppmuntra konsultationer med representanter för våra kyrkor och att underlätta lärande och utbyte av idéer och information i teologiska och pastorala frågor liksom studentutbyte,
- (xi) att inbjuda observatörer till våra kyrkors större händelser,
- (xii) att uppmuntra samarbete mellan gammalkatolska och svenskkyrkliga församlingar där det är möjligt.

Remissinstanserna

Biskopsmötet har fäst uppmärksamheten på två frågeställningar. Den första gäller Svenska kyrkans diakonat som ett permanent karitativt uppdrag i vigningstjänsten till skillnad från den Gammalkatolska kyrkans diakonat, som är en förberedelse inför prästvigning. Den andra avser beskrivningen av kyrkan som sakrament i relation till luthersk tradition.

Remissen gick till Domkapitel och stiftsstyrelser som ombads sända den till fem församlingar i stiftet. Frågorna avsåg om dokumentet gav tillräcklig grund för att förstå de två kyrkornas specifika karaktär och om det fanns en tillräcklig grund för att ingå kyrkogemenskap. Vidare ställdes frågan om innebörden och förpliktelseerna i den föreslagna överenskommelsen var tydliga och acceptabla samt om kyrkogemenskap mellan Svenska kyrkan och Gammalkatolska kyrkan i enlighet med överenskommelsen kunde bejakas.

Fem av stiftet avstod att besvara remissen men tog inte heller avstånd från dokumentet och dess förslag.

Åtta stift svarade, en del både i stiftsstyrelse och domkapitel, i två stift enbart domkapitlet. Sex församlingar sände in svar. Alla remissinstanser som deltog bejakade en överenskommelse om kyrkogemenskap mellan den Gammalkatolska kyrkan av Utrechtunionen och Svenska kyrkan.

Majoriteten av remissinstanserna har menat att olikheten i förståelsen av diakonatet behöver förtydligas. Särskilt ställs frågan om hur erkännandet av varandras vigningstjänster ska uttydas när det gäller diakonatet.

När det gäller beskrivningen av kyrkan som sakrament anför flera remissinstanser frågan om hur detta resonemang förhåller sig till sättet att tala om kyrkan inom Svenska kyrkan. Lunds domkapitel och stiftsstyrelse menar att ”[...] synen på kyrkan som sakrament [...] i varje fall borde problematiseras något i relation till en evangelisk kyrkosyn”.⁷ Linköpings domkapitel och stiftsstyrelse problematiserar frågeställningen:

Kyrkan må beskrivas som ett tecken, men vad detta ”tecken” (jfr både Martin Luther och modern kommunikationsteori och teckenteori) uttrycker är inte självklart. Det är öppet för tolkning, och kommunicerar inget innehåll per automatik. Vi skulle därför önska att det tydligare sägs att kyrkan inte är en behållare för Kristus, som per automatik (*ex opere operato*) helar och frälser. Det är Kristus som frälser, inte kyrkan, eller ämbetet, för den delen.

⁷ Citat i detta avsnitt från *Utrecht and Uppsala on the Way to Communion. Remiss-sammanställning*.

Västerås domkyrkoförsamling efterlyser en komplettering med andra bilder då det finns en risk att endast använda en modell för att beskriva kyrkosynen. Strängnäs domkapitel och stiftsstyrelse för samman resonemangen om kyrkans sakramentalitet med folkkyrkobegreppet.

Reflexionerna kring begreppet kyrkans sakramentalitet är tankeväckande och avviker i grunden inte väsentligt från det i vår kontext långt vanligare folkkyrkobegreppet. Kyrkan som ett konkret, jordiskt uttryck för Guds nåd, som i sitt handlande med varierande framgång förmår manifesteras Guds handlande, kan förstås vara sakramental. Talet om ”kyrkan som sakrament” är emellertid knappast uttryck för en bred konsensus inom Svenska kyrkan i beskrivningen av vår kyrkosyn.

Från Visby domkapitel och stiftsstyrelse påpekas betydelsen av en överenskommelse för utlandsförsamlingarnas arbete liksom att en sådan skulle stärka relationerna till anglikanska kyrkor och till den Filippinska oberoende kyrkan.

Några remissinstanser påpekar att det i dokumentet och i andra liknande dokument finns tendenser till harmonisering, det vill säga att det som förenar lyfts fram medan det som skiljer tonas ner; här ges som exempel den apostoliska successionen, betoningen av nattvarden och förståelsen av sakramenten. Inte heller beskrivs hur läran får genomslag i kyrkfolkets liv. Saknas gör även Ordets förkunnelse.

När det gäller de praktiska konsekvenserna av överenskommelsen ställer Växjö domkapitel frågan om detta innebär att präster i Svenska kyrkan förväntas erbjuda alla de handlingar som i Gammalkatolska kyrkan betraktas som sakrament. Innebär det också att mottagandet av handlingar ska ske kostnadsfritt samt finns det inom landet gammalkatolska församlingar att samverka med och vad innebär det för behovet att få låna kyrkor, frågar domkapitlet vidare.

Ingen av remissinstanser har ansett att de frågor de tagit upp behöver bearbetas före en ekumenisk överenskommelse ingås utan att en sådan bearbetning kan följa senare; samtalsdelegationen framhäver ju även att det finns ett antal frågor som ännu inte är klarlagda.

Sammanfattningsvis stöder remissinstanserna att en ekumenisk överenskommelse ingås mellan Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen. Flera av de frågor remissinstanserna tar upp återkommer när kyrkostyrelsen gör sina överväganden.

Kyrkostyrelsens överväganden och förslag

Teologiska frågeställningar

Både de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen och Svenska kyrkan har en episkopal och synodal karaktär. För dem båda är det centralt att alla medlemmar i kyrkan har möjlighet att delta i uppbyggnaden av den och i ansvarstagande. I Svenska kyrkans sammanhang skulle detta benämnas ansvaret inom de döptas och troendes allmänna prästadöme. Även om kyrkorna skiljer sig avsevärt till sin karaktär, de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna är minoritetskyrkor och Svenska kyrkan majoritetskyrka, betyder inte detta att deras syn på ansvar och uppdrag är väsentligt olika: både lekfolk och vigda har ansvarsuppgifter i respektive kyrka.

De högsta beslutande organen skiljer sig dock avsevärt från varandra: kyrkomötet respektive den internationella biskopskonferensen. Kyrkostyrelsen läser rapporten så att biskopskonferensen inte främst ska förstås som ett organ för kyrkans ämbete utan att biskoparna deltar där som representanter för sina respektive kyrkor. Beslut fattas

Kyrkan som sakrament

Den fråga som diskuterats mest i remissvaren är samtalsrapportens beskrivning av kyrkan som sakrament. Beskrivningen kan tyckas ensidig och inte ta med andra sätt att förstå Kristi kyrka. Denna fråga har tidigare behandlats i den ekumeniska dialogen mellan Stockholms katolska stift och Svenska kyrkan vilken presenterats i rapporten *Kyrkan som sakrament* (1999).⁸ Denna rapport redovisar en del av den internationella ekumeniska diskussionen om kyrkans sakramentalitet. Den nämner bland annat den dialog mellan Lutherska världsförbundet och den romersk-katolska kyrkan som presenterades 1994.⁹ Här konstaterades att det fanns samstämmighet om att kyrkan är ett instrument och tecken för frälsningen, och i denna mening frälsningens sakrament. Det fanns dock invändningar såtillvida som kyrkan främst var rummet där ordet förkunnas och sakramenten förvaltas och att kyrkan endast i så härledd bemärkelse är instrument för frälsningen. Dialograpporten med Stockholms katolska stift slutar med avsnitt om kyrkan som ursakramentet, som sakrament för världen och som enhetens sakrament. Det är inte här möjligt att gå in på rapportens detaljer men den visar att de frågeställningar som lyfts fram i samtalsdelegationens material inte är nytt för Svenska kyrkan.

Även i en av samtalsomgångarna på 1990-talet med dåvarande Svenska Missionsförbundet lyftes frågan om kyrkans sakramentalitet fram. I rapporten konstaterades att två principer bröts mot varandra, en som tog sin utgångspunkt i församlingen av troende och en som tog sin utgångspunkt i sakramentsförvaltning och Ordets förkunnelse. I en sakramental kyrkosyn kan inte dessa åtskiljas utan var två nödvändiga komponenter, menade rapporten.¹⁰

Men frågan om kyrkan som sakrament hade långt tidigare förts fram av den dåvarande professorn, sedermera ärkebiskopen Yngve Brilioth. ”Kyrkan är i sig själv ett sakrament, en synlig bärare av osynliga gåvor”. Kyrkan konstitueras av Andens verksamhet genom nådemedlen.¹¹

I Kyrkornas världsråds samtalsdokument om kyrkans väsen och uppgift, *Kyrkan – på väg mot en gemensam vision*, diskuteras också kyrkans sakramentalitet.

Några av Nya testamentets texter använder ordet mysterium (*mysterion*) både för Guds frälsningsplan i Kristus (jfr Ef 1:9, 3:4–6) och för den nära relationen mellan Kristus och kyrkan (jfr Ef 5:32, Kol 1:24–28). Detta antyder att kyrkan har en andlig, transcendent kvalitet som inte

8 *Kyrkan som sakrament*. En rapport om kyrkosyn. Stockholms katolska stift och Svenska kyrkan, Uppsala 1999.

9 *Church and Justification. Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification*, Geneva 1994.

10 *Guds kyrka och en levande församling*. Rapport från den officiella samtalsgruppen mellan Svenska kyrkan och Svenska Missionsförbundet, Stockholm 1995, s. 176–178.

11 Persenius, Ragnar, Brilioth som ekumen, i Yngve Brilioth – historiker, teolog, kyrkoledare, ed. Oloph Bexell, Skellefteå 1997; Brilioth, Yngve, *Kyrkokristendom*, Uppsala 1935.

kan förstås enbart genom kyrkans synliga uttryck. Kyrkans jordiska och andliga dimensioner kan inte skiljas åt. Den kristna gemenskapens organisatoriska strukturer måste förstås och bedömas, på gott och ont, i ljuset av Guds frälsningsgåvor i Kristus som firas i liturgin. Kyrkan, som i sitt eget liv förkroppsligar frälsningens mysterium och mänsklighetens förvandling, deltar i Kristi uppdrag att försona allt med Gud och med varandra genom Kristus (jfr 2 Kor 5:18–21, Rom 8:18–25).¹²

Samtalsdokumentet beskriver också de skiljaktigheter som finns i att förstå kyrkan på ett sådant sätt.

Även om det finns stor enighet om att Gud inrättade kyrkan som det främsta medlet för att åstadkomma sin universella frälsningsplan, tror vissa gemenskaper att detta bäst uttrycks genom att tala om ”kyrkan som sakrament”. Andra använder inte sådant språk eller förkastar det helt och hållet. De som använder uttrycket ”kyrkan som sakrament” gör det eftersom de ser kyrkan som ett tydligt tecken och medel (ibland beskrivet med ordet redskap) för den gemenskap människor har med varandra i gemenskapen med den treeniga Guden. De som avstår från att använda detta uttryck menar att användningen skulle kunna skymma skillnaden mellan kyrkan som helhet och de enskilda sakramenten och att det kan leda till att man bortser från den synd som fortfarande finns bland gemenskapens medlemmar. Alla är överens om att Gud är frälsningens upphov. Skillnaderna gäller de sätt på vilka de olika kyrkosamfundet förstår kyrkans karaktär och roll och riternas betydelse för frälsningsverket.¹³

Kyrkornas världsråds samtalsdokument pekar på att de som inte vill använda uttrycket ”kyrkan som sakrament” inte bestrider att kyrkan är ett verkligt tecken på Guds närvaro och aktivitet. Och de som vill använda begreppet förnekar inte heller sakramentens unicitet.

Kyrkostyrelsen kan alltså notera att frågan om kyrkan som sakrament förekommit i den lutherska och svenskkyrkliga dialogen under nu lång tid. Den är också aktuell i nutida ekumeniska samtal och reflektion och det tycks som en ökad förståelse finns mellan skilda synpunkter.

Beskrivningen av kyrkan som sakrament dominerar samtalsrapporten mellan Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen och andra perspektiv har därmed inte blivit lika tydliga. Visserligen ingår evangeliets förkunnelse i beskrivningen av hur kyrkan är en, helig, katolsk och apostolisk, samt av det som formar den lokala kyrkan och dess uppdrag att vittna (*martyria*). Från ett svenskkyrkligt perspektiv hade det ändå varit av stort värde om också den folkkyrkliga synen på kyrkan som nådeserbjudande och Augsburgska bekännelsens beskrivning av kyrkan som ”de heligas samfund, i vilket evangelium rent förkunnas och sakramenten rätt förvaltas” hade funnits med som perspektiv.¹⁴

Kyrkostyrelsen menar att idén om kyrkan som sakrament inte är allmänt utbredd i Svenska kyrkan. Däremot är det möjligt att tala om kyrkan som sakramental i

12 Kyrkan – på väg mot en gemensam vision. Ekumeniskt samtal om kyrkans väsen och uppgift. Sveriges kristna råds skriftserie nr 21, Bromma 2014. Art. 26.

13 Ibid art 27.

14 Augsburgska bekännelsen art VII.

överförd bemärkelse på samma sätt som vi kan tala om skapelsens sakrament. Från detta perspektiv kan kyrkan förstås som ett jordiskt uttryck för Guds nåd genom ordet och sakramenten. Även om ytterligare dialog och förtydliganden skulle behövas när det gäller kyrkosynen är det inte nödvändigt att ett sådant samtal måste föregå en ekumenisk överenskommelse. Det finns en tillräcklig samsyn som en grund för en sådan.

Kyrkans vigningstjänst

Rapporten från samtalsdelegationen diskuterar särskilt kyrkans ämbete eller vigningstjänsten. Kristus inkarnerades som människa, inte primärt som man. För de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna har denna syn inneburit att de har öppnat sina ämbeten för kvinnor. Svenska kyrkan delar denna syn och utgår från att vigningstjänstens roll att företräda Kristus är grundad i dopet. Alla döpta, både kvinnor och män, har en kallelse att förmedla evangeliet, att följa Kristus och att vittna i världen. Vigningen bekräftar och ger uttryck för kallelsen till livslång tjänst i ett uppdrag som fullgörs i och för församlingen.¹⁵ Kyrkostyrelsen ser att det finns en tillräcklig samsyn mellan de båda kyrkotraditionerna och deras sätt att se på vigningstjänsten. Uppdraget ges av Kristus till den som vigs. Vid nattvardsbordet leder prästen gudstjänsten, som en representant för honom som är måltidens egentlige värd. Men denna funktion är inte knuten till prästens kön utan just till Kristi och prästens mänsklighet.

Inom de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna är diakonatet ett led på vägen till prästvigningen och har inte den karitativa karaktär som diakonatet har i Svenska kyrkan. Diakonater inom vår kyrka har sitt ursprung i äldre protestantiskt socialt engagemang medan diakonatet inom de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna inte är ett permanent uppdrag utan något tillfälligt i väntan på prästvigning i enlighet med den romersk-katolska ordningen. Vi noterar med glädje att de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna visar ett intresse för att lära känna den svenskkyrkliga diakonin på ett närmare sätt och att ett permanent diakonat är på väg.

De kyrkor med vilka Svenska kyrkan har ekumeniska överenskommelser ser olika på diakonatet. Så är detta inom den Filippinska oberoende kyrkan både ett liturgiskt diakonat och karitativt diakonat med uppgifter att medverka vid utdelandet av nattvarden, döpa barn och att uppsöka sjuka och fattiga och förmedla bistånd. Inte heller i överenskommelsen med IFI fanns det tankar om att diakonatets utformning behövde vara exakt lika.¹⁶

Det diakonat som finns inom de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna liknar främst diakonatet inom de anglikanska kyrkorna. Frågan om diakonatet diskuterades i Borgåöverenskommelsen där det konstaterades att det tredade ämbetet med biskop, präst och diakon blev det allmänna mönstret i kyrkan under de första århundradena och att det bibehålls i många kyrkor, om än ofta bara delvis. I själva överenskommelsen markerade kyrkorna att de förpliktade sig till att arbeta för en gemensam syn på den diakonala tjänsten.¹⁷ Att ha en gemensam syn på diakonen var inte ett villkor för att den ekumeniska överenskommelsen mellan de anglikanska kyrkorna och de nordiska och baltiska lutherska kyrkorna skulle förverkligas.

15 Kallad till diakon och präst i Svenska kyrkan, biskopsbrev 2014 s. 16.

16 CsSkr 1995:5 Överenskommelse mellan Svenska kyrkan och Filippinska oberoende kyrkan.

17 Borgåöverenskommelsen. Nordisk ekumenisk skriftserie 29, Uppsala 1998, s. 22, 32.

Svenska kyrkan delar den reformatoriska synen att vigningstjänsten är till för kyrkans uppdrag att räcka evangeliet genom förkunnelse och sakrament. Det ligger i kyrkans mandat att närmare fatta beslut om hur denna vigningstjänst ska utformas i skilda situationer och kontexter. Det är en syn som Svenska kyrkan också bör tillämpa när den möter andra kyrkors beslut och utformning av sina olika uppdrag inom deras ämbeten eller vigningstjänster.

Kyrkostyrelsen menar att skillnaderna i synen på vigningstjänsten inte är något hinder för en ekumenisk överenskommelse. I fortsatta överläggningar finns möjligheter att komma till en ökad samsyn när det gäller kyrkans diakoni och diakonatet som ett karitativt uppdrag i kyrkans vigningstjänst.

Successionen

Den succession som samtalsrapporten presenterar är av väsentligt mer omfattande karaktär än enbart en handpåläggningssuccession. Den pekar på att successionen ursprungligen var en lärosuccession, en succession i biskopstjänsten och en hela kyrkans succession. Dessa hölls samman och ställdes inte mot varandra. Den apostoliska successionen är ett kännetecken för den katolska (allmänliga) kyrkan vilken har uppgiften att bevara traditionen från apostlarna, påpekar rapporten. Biskoparna är tecken på detta men samtidigt instrumenten för att bevara traditionen

För Svenska kyrkan är kyrkans apostolicitet det centrala. Ofta har handpåläggningssuccessionen berörts som en gåva till Svenska kyrkan, något att vara tacksam över, men aldrig förts fram som krav mot andra kyrkor i relationen med dem. Svenska kyrkan har inom Lutherska världsförbundet haft djupa och långa förbindelser också med kyrkor som tidigare saknat denna handpåläggningssuccession, bland annat den danska folkkyrkan och Norska kyrkan. Genom Borgåöverenskommelsen kunde kyrkorna komma till en gemensam förståelse om att kyrkans apostolicitet hade bevarats också i kyrkor där ett brott hade skett i handpåläggningsskedjan. Den senmedeltida förståelsen av apostolisk succession som en konkret gestaltning av kontinuiteten i uppdraget kunde därmed förenas med en djupare insikt om vad det innebär att bevara kyrkans apostolicitet i dagens värld.

Både Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna har, trots sin brytning med den romersk-katolska kyrkan, bevarat både handpåläggningssuccessionen och den apostoliska successionen i vidare mening. Kyrkostyrelsen menar att det är denna senare förståelse av successionen som är den centrala och finner att båda kyrkorna utifrån denna arbetar med frågor om vad det är att vara kyrka i dag och hur det apostoliska budskapet ska förstås.

Sakramenten

Svenska kyrkan räknar med två sakrament, instiftade av Kristus, vilka med jordiska medel förmedlar osynliga och himmelska nådegåvor: dop och nattvard. Även för de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna är dop och nattvard de viktigaste sakramenten.

Det är tydligt att de båda kyrkotraditionerna definierar sakrament på olika sätt. Att även andra handlingar inom Svenska kyrkan vill förmedla nåd och välsignelse är klart, men de kallas fördenskull inte sakrament. Inte heller ordet sakramentalier används till exempel om konfirmation eller vigningsgudstjänsterna. De Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen kallar förutom dop och nattvard även konfirmationen, äktenskapet, prästvigningen, bikten och de sjukas smörjelse sakrament. Bikten har dock i stort sett fallit ur bruk. Att dessa inte faller in till alla delar i den definition som brukas inom Svenska kyrkan för ett sakrament behöver dock inte

betyda att skillnaden är avsevärd. I överenskommelsen med den Filippinska oberoende kyrkan, som också i sitt romersk-katolska arv räknar med sju sakrament, framhölls att den har dop och nattvard som huvudsakrament, vilka var nödvändiga frälsningsmedel, varför skillnaden till Svenska kyrkan i praktiken inte var så stor.

När det gäller överenskommelsens lydelse att medlemmar av den andra kyrkan ska kunna ta emot sakramenten och ta del av det pastorala livet får detta inte förstås så att Svenska kyrkans präster skulle ge andra tjänster till gammalkatolskt troende än de gör till vanliga medlemmar. Det handlar först och främst om dop och nattvard. Vad som i övrigt kan vara aktuellt får avgöras i den pastorala situationen och kan inte stadgas närmare i själva överenskommelsen.

Sammanfattning

Den framlagda rapporten för ett omfattande teologiskt resonemang om kyrkan och om kyrkosyn, sakrament och vigningstjänst. Trots skillnader i uttryckssätt och betoningar känner de båda kyrkorna igen sig i varandra. De bygger båda på en samverkan inom hela Guds folk i kyrkornas liv, i liturgi och styrelse. De skilda betoningar som finns mellan dem när det gäller synen på kyrkan, vigningstjänsten, successionen och sakramenten är inte av sådant slag att de inte kan rymmas inom en ekumenisk överenskommelse.

Överenskommelsens förslag

Till sin struktur liknar överenskommelsen andra ekumeniska överenskommelser, som till exempel Borgå-deklarationen. De inleds med några punkter som förklarar grunden för den enhet som kyrkorna har funnit med varandra. Därefter fortsätter den med de förpliktelser som överenskommelsen leder till, det vill säga vilka praktiska utslag överenskommelsen får i kyrkolivet på olika nivåer inom kyrkorna. Andra överenskommelser har haft liknande uppbyggnad. Så hade överenskommelsen med Metodistkyrkan i Sverige en likartad struktur; den hänvisade i sin första punkt till den enhet i läran som fanns för att därefter peka på de konsekvenser en sådan enhet förde med sig.

Överenskommelsen är således formulerad på två olika nivåer. Den första beskriver grunderna för överenskommelsen och är indelad i punkterna i–iv. Den andra nivån beskriver de mer praktiska konsekvenserna och framtida samverkan. Detta beskrivs i punkterna v–xii.

Överenskommelsen inleds således med de båda kyrkotraditionernas gemensamma grund: tron på en, helig, allmänlig (katolsk) och apostolisk kyrka. I punkt ii konstateras att kyrkornas olikheter av skilda slag inte hindrar att de är del i den apostoliska traditionen och del i en enhet i mångfald. Vidare framhålls i punkt iii det liturgiska och sakramentala livet, den obrutna episkopala strukturen och den djupa förpliktelsen mot kyrkans synliga enhet. Här nämns även en öppen och kritisk attityd mot samhällets förändrade värderingar, det vill säga kyrkornas kontextualitet. Till sist framhålls i punkt iv att båda kyrkorna har en fast grund, både andlig och institutionell, som gör det möjligt med fortsatta relationer och stöd.

Punkterna v till xii pekar på praktiska åtgärder för att förverkliga överenskommelsen. En del av dessa ligger på nationellt plan såsom vigningar och överläggningar. Andra handlar om det lokala församlinglivet, som pastoralvård och mottagande av sakramenten. Åter andra handlar om beslut på domkapitelsnivå, som frågor om behörighetsförklaring av präster och diakoner.

När det gäller innehållet i de olika delarna av överenskommelsen ger en jämförelse med Borgådeklarationen en bild av samstämmighet, även om det finns skillnader. I Borgådeklarationen hänvisas till att Guds Ord rent förkunnas i kyrkorna vilket saknas i den föreslagna överenskommelsen. I denna finns en hänvisning till det kontextuella uppdraget, att tolka budskapet i tiden, vilket saknas i Borgådeklarationen. När det gäller de praktiska konsekvenserna innehåller Borgådeklarationen en förpliktelse att arbeta för en gemensam syn på den diakonala tjänsten, vilket saknas i denna. Denna fråga finns dock väl diskuterad i rapporten.

Kyrkostyrelsen kan sammanfattningsvis konstatera att överenskommelsen både till sin struktur och sitt innehåll stämmer väl överens med tidigare tecknade överenskommelser och går till sitt innehåll inte utöver vad som redan överenskomits med de anglikanska kyrkorna. De skillnader som finns mellan motiveringar och praktiska konsekvenser har ingen avgörande betydelse.

Kyrkorättsliga konsekvenser

Överenskommelsen för inte med sig något behov av ändringar i kyrkoordningen.

I kyrkoordningens 59 kapitel om Svenska kyrkans relationer till andra kyrkor och samfund finns bestämmelser om överenskommelser och avtal om särskild ekumenisk samverkan. Sådana beslut fattas av kyrkomötet. Den föreslagna överenskommelsen omfattas av denna bestämmelse.

Överenskommelsens punkter om att betrakta den andra kyrkans medlemmar som sina egna, att välkomna dem till pastoral omsorg eller att omfatta dem med förböner för inte med sig något behov av ändringar i kyrkoordningen. Här avses sådan pastoral omsorg som varje församling ger till den som söker dennas tjänster. När det gäller frågan om att dela resurser kan det innebära att gammalkatolska medlemmar kan få låna en kyrka inom Svenska kyrkan eller att någon av utlandsförsamlingarna kan få tillgång till ett kyrkorum i någon av de gammalkatolska församlingarna. Inte heller detta innebär något behov av förtydliganden i kyrkoordningen utan sköts på lokalt plan. Överenskommelsen har inga bestämmelser om kostnader för de olika tjänsterna men det får förutsättas att avsikten är att kyrkorna så långt det är möjligt ska behandla varandra generöst och inte onödigtvis begära ersättningar för hyra av en kyrkolokal eller liknande även om deras olika finansieringsmodeller kan innebära skillnader. Att pastoral omsorg inte ska ersättas och inte heller dopförrättningar torde vara självklart.

Av bestämmelserna i 59 kap. 13 § framgår att en präst i Svenska kyrkan får leda en gudstjänst inom en kyrka med vilken Svenska kyrkan ingått en särskild överenskommelse med vidare hänvisning till 17 kap. 17 §. En biskop får leda en vigningsgudstjänst inom en kyrka med vilken Svenska kyrkan har ingått en ekumenisk överenskommelse i enlighet med bestämmelserna i 59 kap. 20 § och 25 kap. 9 §. Dessa bestämmelser har bäring på överenskommelsen och innebär att en präst i Svenska kyrkan kan leda gudstjänster inom de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen, under de villkor i övrigt som dessa kyrkor ställer (punkt viii).

Den som är präst inom de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen får i enlighet med bestämmelserna i 31 kap. 2 § förklaras behörig att utöva uppdraget som präst inom Svenska kyrkan i enlighet med de ytterligare krav som framgår av bestämmelsen. För visst tillfälle eller vis tid får domkapitlet förklara en präst behörig i enlighet med 4 §. På motsvarande sätt finns bestämmelser om diakon i

32 kap. 2 och 4 §§. Någon behörighetsförklaring behövs inte för ett visst tillfälle om det inte är fråga om en kyrklig handling.¹⁸ Genom de möjligheter som därmed finns öppna för tjänstgöring inom Svenska kyrkan uppfylls överenskommelsens viii punkt. De respektive kyrkornas olika ämbeten erkänns sålunda och någon reordination för tjänstgöring i den andra kyrkan ska inte ske.

Vad gäller biskopsvigningar är det ärkebiskopen som leder dessa och inbjuder de assistenter ärkebiskopen önskar för en viss vigning. Punkten ix i överenskommelsen får då vara vägledande. Det blir även möjligt för biskopar i Svenska kyrkan att leda vigningar inom de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen om så skulle påfordras. Kyrkoordningen har inga bestämmelser om biskoparnas övriga deltagande vid vigningar i andra kyrkor. Deltagande i sådana vigningar brukar fördelas mellan biskoparna genom ärkebiskopens och biskopsmötets försorg.

Inte heller de övriga punkterna i överenskommelsen innebär att Svenska kyrkan behöver företa några ändringar i kyrkoordningen. Att ordna med konsultationer, att inbjuda observatörer och uppmuntra samverkan ligger inom den ram som hör till ett ekumeniskt samarbete.

Kyrkostyrelsen anser att överenskommelsen och dess tolv punkter är en god grund för ett ekumeniskt samarbete mellan kyrkorna och konstaterar att överenskommelsen inte föranleder några ändringar i kyrkoordningen.

Ekumeniska konsekvenser

Rapporten *Utrecht and Uppsala on the Way to Communion* anger att detta är första gången de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen genomför en dialog med en luthersk kyrka. De har tidigare träffats överenskommelser med de anglikanska kyrkorna, också dessa en del av de reformerade kyrkosamfundet, men har inte haft någon dialog med en luthersk kyrka tidigare. Att detta blev Svenska kyrkan har delvis med dennas arv att göra, med en obruten succession och ett bevarat episkopat, men även det starka ekumeniska engagemanget. Återigen får alltså Svenska kyrkan agera som ekumenisk brobyggare, denna gång mellan den lutherska kyrkofamiljen och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna. Kyrkostyrelsen bedömer det vara av stort intresse för den framtida ekumeniska utvecklingen och arbetet för kyrkans synliga enhet att dialogen har ägt rum och att en överenskommelse kan tecknas. Detta bör även vara värdefullt för övriga lutherska kyrkor inom Lutherska världsförbundet. På detta sätt fortsätter Svenska kyrkan att vara en ekumenisk brokyrka mellan skilda kyrkotraditioner.

I de relationer som Svenska kyrkan har med andra samfund bedömer kyrkostyrelsen att en överenskommelse kommer att mottas positivt. De anglikanska kyrkorna har redan en ekumenisk överenskommelse med de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna sedan mer än åttio år. Svenska kyrkans ekumeniska överenskommelser med Engelska kyrkan är nästan sekelgama. Genom Borgåöverenskommelsen är de utökade till övriga anglikanska kyrkor i Storbritannien och Irland. De anglikanska kyrkorna, Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen har redan ekumeniska överenskommelser med IFI. Att Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen på detta sätt sluter en egen överenskommelse stärker även banden med de anglikanska kyrkorna och IFI då de olika kyrkorna på

¹⁸ För att förrätta vigsel fordras även Kammarkollegiets förordnande som vigselför rättare inom Svenska kyrkan.

KsSkr 2015:4 detta sätt förenas med ömsesidiga ekumeniska överenskommelser. Detta bidrar till att stärka kyrkans synliga enhet.

Den romersk-katolska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen har i dag ett konstruktivt samtalsförhållande; en ekumenisk överenskommelse bedöms inte påverka Svenska kyrkans relation med den romersk-katolska kyrkan.

Barnkonsekvensanalys

För barn till Svenska kyrkans medlemmar torde en kyrkogemenskap med Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen främst ha konkret inverkan för dem som bor eller vistas utomlands, såväl där det finns Svenskkyrkliga församlingar, som där det inte finns. Förslaget på kyrkogemenskap torde vara positivt för de barn som genom gemenskapen får möjlighet att på ett självklart sätt delta i verksamhet och gemenskap oavsett vilken församling och samfund som finns lokalt. I de familjer där föräldrar är med i de respektive olika kyrkorna underlättar också kyrkogemenskap vad gäller att leva ett kristet liv tillsammans oavsett var man bor och behöver pastoral omsorg.

Utdrag ur kyrkostyrelsens protokoll

KsSkr 2015:4

Utdrag ur protokoll fört vid kyrkostyrelsens sammanträde den 11 juni 2015.

Närvarande: Wanja Lundby-Wedin, förste vice ordförande, ledamöterna, Mats Hagelin, Marta Axner, Nils Gårder, Birgitta Halvarsson, Lars Johnsson, Sven E. Kragh, Anna Lundblad Mårtensson, Eric Muhl, Ulla Richardsson, Erik Sjöstrand, Karl-Gunnar Svensson samt tjänstgörande ersättarna biskop Per Eckerdal, Helena Nordvall och Birger Wernersson.

Föredragande: Kyrkosekreterare Cristina Grenholm

Kyrkostyrelsen beslöt i enlighet med arbetsutskottets förslag

att till kyrkomötet lämna skrivelsen 2015:4 Ekumenisk överenskommelse mellan Svenska kyrkan och de Gammalkatolska kyrkorna av Utrechtunionen.

Utrecht and Uppsala on the way to communion

Report from the official
dialogue between
the Old Catholic Churches
of the Union of Utrecht
and
the Church of Sweden

2013

Index

1 Introduction	28
1.1 Two churches with one faith and one mission.....	28
1.2 Two churches on the way to communion and visible unity for the sake of the world	28
1.3 A changing ecumenical landscape	29
1.4 Implications of church community	29
1.5 Preliminary remarks on terminology	30
1.6 The disposition of the document.....	31
2 Occasional contacts and the start of the dialogue	32
3 Presentation of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht	34
3.1 Historical development	34
3.1.1 The Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands.....	34
3.1.2 The Old Catholic Churches in Germany, Switzerland and the Habsburg Monarchy	35
3.1.3 The Old Catholic Churches of Slav origin.....	35
3.1.4 The Union of Utrecht and its theology.....	36
3.2 The significance of protest and reform for Old Catholic self-understanding	37
3.3 Foundational documents of the Union of Utrecht.....	38
3.4 Episcopacy, synodality and the ordained ministry.....	38
3.5 Ecumenical concerns and achievements.....	40
3.5.1 Relationships with the Anglican Churches	41
3.5.2 Relationships with the Orthodox Churches	42
3.5.3 Relationships with the Roman Catholic Church.....	43
3.5.4 Relationships with Lutheran and other Protestant Churches	43
3.5.5 The Significance of Faith and Order in the ecumenical movement.....	44
3.6 The life of the church.....	44
3.6.1 A celebrating church.....	44
3.6.2 A witnessing church.....	45
3.6.3 A serving church.....	45
4 Presentation of the Church of Sweden	46
4.1 Historical development	46
4.1.1 Medieval origins	46
4.1.2 Reformation in Sweden.....	46
4.1.3 The Church of Sweden and increasing pluralism	47
4.2 The significance of reformation for the self-understanding of the Church of Sweden.....	49
4.3 Foundational documents	50
4.4 Episcopacy, synodality and ministry in the Church of Sweden.....	51
4.5 Ecumenical concerns and achievements.....	52
4.5.1 Relationships with the Anglican Churches	52
4.5.2 Relationships with the Orthodox Churches	53
4.5.3 Relationships with the Roman Catholic Church.....	53
4.5.4 Relationships with other Lutheran and Protestant churches	55

4.6 The life of the church	56
4.6.1 A celebrating church	56
4.6.2 A witnessing church.....	57
4.6.3 A serving church	58
5 The church as a gift of God's presence in the world: our common vision.....	60
5.1 The marks of the church according to the creed	60
5.1.1 The church is one and holy	61
5.1.2 The church is catholic and apostolic	61
5.2 Local, regional and worldwide dimensions of the one church	62
5.2.1 The local church.....	63
5.2.2 The regional and worldwide communion of local churches	64
5.3 The sacramentality of the church and the means of grace	64
5.3.1 Sacramental life in the Old Catholic Churches	65
5.3.2 Sacramental life in the Church of Sweden.....	66
5.3.3 Conclusion	66
5.4 The apostolic succession and the understanding of the episcopal ministry	66
5.4.1 The historic episcopate in the Old Catholic Church	67
5.4.2 The historic episcopate in the Church of Sweden.....	68
5.4.3 Conclusion	68
6 Themes for ongoing consideration following from the common vision	69
6.1 The apostolic tradition and the teaching of the ecumenical councils	69
6.1.1 The authority of the ecumenical councils	69
6.1.2 The question of the <i>Filioque</i>	70
6.2 The connection between Eucharistic sharing and ecclesial communion	70
6.3 Transitivity in established communion	71
7 Recommendations	73
8 Appendices	74
8.1 Diagrammatic presentations of dioceses, structures ..	74
8.2 Meetings of the dialogue.....	76

1 Introduction

In 2005 an official dialogue between the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht started on the initiative of the Archbishop of Uppsala KG Hammar and the Archbishop of Utrecht Joris Vercammen. Since then a working group appointed by the two churches has met twice a year in Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands. What follows is the report of this group with concluding recommendations agreed upon on 12th April 2013. This report is now presented to the two churches for consideration and appropriate action.

1.1 Two churches with one faith and one mission

The Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht are in some respects as different as churches can be in Europe: one is a national majority church, shaped by a common history, confession and language. The other is a family of churches, autonomous in their inner life and administration but held together by a common liturgical tradition and the International Old Catholic Bishops Conference. Thus it is possible to speak of this church either in the plural or the singular. The Old Catholic Churches are minority churches in their countries, shaped by different cultures with their local histories and traditions. The Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Church are, however, bound together by a shared theological foundation, common catholic and apostolic heritage, and common mission in Europe.

The two churches have a history of separation from the Roman Catholic Church whilst continuing the catholic heritage in their own ways, from pre-reformation catholicism in the Church of Sweden and from counter-reformation catholicism in the Old Catholic Church. The present encounter of these two traditions is unique. They both preserve a rich liturgical and eucharistic life, value an unbroken episcopal structure, have a priesthood including both men and women, have a deep commitment to the visible unity of the church and to the ecumenical movement, and maintain an open, though critical, attitude to changing values in society.

The Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Church were founding members of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and they are members of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). Both have for many years participated in inter-confessional dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. They have similar agreements of full communion with the Anglican churches in the British Isles and with the Philippine Independent Church.

1.2 Two churches on the way to communion and visible unity for the sake of the world

The ultimate motivation for seeking visible unity between churches is the high-priestly prayer in John 17:21. Christ himself prays that his followers “may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Every endeavor to achieve unity can be seen as obedience to Christ. Unity is not optional, but an essential dimension of what it means to be the church of Christ. Where there is division, the reality of the church is impaired, the credibility of the gospel is weakened, and the mission of the church is hampered.

The unity of the church does not require absolute uniformity in structure, nor in forms of worship or even theology. Unity is a unity in reconciled diversity, spiritual,

but made visible through sacramental communion. As Christians we are called to make “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The apostle affirms that “there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (Eph. 4:3-6).

As the document will show, we have discovered that our churches are already united in faith, worship and mission, so that nothing seems to prevent us from affirming full sacramental communion between them. In accordance with Christ’s prayer and the apostolic exhortation, we therefore propose that the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Church of the Union of Utrecht recognize one another as truly catholic and apostolic churches and agree on full eucharistic communion.

1.3 A changing ecumenical landscape

The ecumenical landscape in Europe is changing. National and confessional borders no longer separate churches from each other to the same extent as in the past. Traditional churches, modern denominations and new faith communities encounter each other everywhere. All are impacted by an increasingly secular context. New means of communication bring a world of diversity into every home, and in the multi-cultural and pluralistic society, not only mutual tolerance but an active recognition of “the other” is expected. Churches are challenged in their faith, self-understanding and mission and need to consult and support each other in this situation.

In profound gratitude for the heritage of the ancient church and the renewal of our churches from the 16th century and onwards, they now seek to make a joint and constructive contribution to European values and spirituality by coming closer together. Both churches bring with them a long heritage of ecumenical dialogue with the ultimate aim of reaching the full visible unity of the worldwide church.

In the ongoing reformation of the church (*ecclesia semper reformanda*), these churches – different as they are – bring a particular and invaluable gift: the faith of the apostolic church which can be related to freedom, equality and democracy. Open to everyone seeking God, vulnerable but strong through the gospel, these churches are signs and instruments of Christ’s presence when God’s grace is proclaimed and the sacraments are celebrated. They share the conviction that neither unlimited diversity, nor protective institutionalism could provide a relevant response to the challenges of our time. At a time when commitment to visible unity is weakened and historical tradition is often disregarded, the two churches are called to be a bridge from the past to the present and to be signs of the future.

1.4 Implications of church community

If communion between the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht were acknowledged, there would be a number of possible implications, for example:

- Baptized members of the two churches, visiting, working and living where there are congregations of either church, would be able to receive sacramental and pastoral ministries and be regarded as full communicant members of the other church.

- Church buildings and other facilities could be made available to the other church for their own services. This would be particularly important for the Church of Sweden with its extensive international ministry.
- Coordination of and cooperation in common obligations and interests in relation to partner churches like the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Philippine Independent Church and in those ecumenical organizations of which both are members.
- The Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches could mutually strengthen each other in their spiritual and diaconal work.

1.5 Preliminary remarks on terminology

In this document we use a number of terms that, as long as they are undefined, may seem to be self-evident or unequivocal. In fact they can be misleading because of connotations that are linked to them in common use, or because their contents have changed over time. In the context of two churches trying to find out how much they have in common and to what extent their differences are compatible, in order to discern the possibility of living in some form of ecclesial communion, this fact involves the risk of facile illusions as well as unjust prejudices. Moreover, such terms have sometimes served distinct contemporary and sometimes ecclesiastical political agendas.

As the Roman Catholic Church still determines the image of catholic Christianity in the public consciousness, the use of the term “catholic” requires explanation. When the word is used without further qualification, it is here a phenomenological description referring to a number of aspects of theology and life which are shared by a number of churches, for example a desire to be in continuity with the church through the ages, the role of sacraments and liturgical worship, the presence of episcopal ministry etc. When used to connote a specific church, the word will be qualified, such as Roman Catholic or Old Catholic. In what specific sense the Old Catholic Churches are catholic will become apparent in chapter 3, but the name should not lead to them being confused with reactionary groups within Roman Catholicism. Similarly, how the Church of Sweden can be understood as catholic will become apparent in chapter 4. In chapter 5 the term is elaborated in a more theological, ecclesiological manner comparing both our churches to formulate a common vision.

In some European countries the term “Lutheran” is simply identified with a local Protestant tradition, at times in contradistinction to the Roman Catholic Church. In this document we avoid polemical use of the term. The word can be used in a generic sense as referring to churches or ideas belonging to the reformation tradition stemming from Martin Luther. In chapter 4 the way in which the Church of Sweden has been shaped by that tradition will be specified, as will the appropriateness of the use of the term “Protestant” for it.

The English word “evangelical” can be translated in two ways in Swedish. When connoting that the life and teaching of a church are in accordance with the teaching of the gospel it is rendered *evangelisk*, whilst when having the sense of a low-church movement that stresses conservative biblical interpretation and a personal and actual experience of faith, it is *evangelikal*. The relevance of this distinction will become apparent in understanding the Church of Sweden.

The term “folk church” is generally used where a church is an unquestioned part of a society. In a folk church, membership is almost automatically passed on from

generation to generation or is only to a limited extent consciously chosen. The terms “folk church” and “national church” can be connected, but the latter has often been used to define a church within definite national boundaries but relatively independent and autonomous in relation to the state and without necessarily having a majority status in terms of population. Thus both the Old Catholic Churches and the Church of Sweden can be defined as national churches, but in different ways, as will become apparent.

1.6 The disposition of the document

Since the purpose of this document is to provide an understanding of the two churches which will enable their governing bodies to make a responsible decision on the possibility of church fellowship or ecclesial communion, the remaining sections will have the following disposition. In chapter 2 there will be a brief description of contacts between the churches previous to this dialogue, as well as the immediate background to why and how it was initiated. Since the Old Catholic Church is relatively unknown to members of the Church of Sweden and vice versa the next two major chapters (3 and 4) will provide historical overviews of their development as well as key aspects of their theological self-understanding. Moreover, their respective ecumenical contexts will be described. Finally, these presentations will try to communicate an impression of what church life looks like in practice. Chapter 5 discusses various aspects of a theology of the church in a way which shows some basic common features whilst indicating distinctive nuances. It is proposed that there is sufficient convergence in this understanding to provide a basis for communion between the two churches. In chapter 6 a number of issues are discussed which will need to be subject to profounder mutual understanding, especially in relation to our respective ecumenical contexts. These matters should not be obstacles to communion but understanding them more fully will be part of the shared journey that lies ahead. Finally, on the basis of the mutual understanding of our histories and characteristic theological identities, as well as the shared ecclesiological vision and the acceptance of a continued journey of theological discovery, chapter 8 proposes the acknowledgments and recommendations that will bring the Union of Utrecht and the Church of Sweden into communion.

2 Occasional contacts and the start of the dialogue

Preceding this official dialogue between the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht initiated in 2005, there have been a number of earlier contacts and mutual visits. Though these contacts were rather incidental in character, they have a certain mutual interest.

The first contacts date from the last quarter of the 19th century. Eduard Herzog (1841-1924), the first bishop of the Swiss Old Catholic Church, mentioned his meeting in 1886 with the young Swedish theologian, Karl Magnus Thordén, who was working on an academic study of the Swiss Old Catholic Church. Herzog quoted the opinion of the Anglican bishop John Wordsworth, who wrote a book on the history of the Church of Sweden and who considered this church as the closest to pre-reformation catholicism among all Protestant churches.

The life and teachings of the Church of Sweden were the subject of several articles in the Dutch Old Catholic newspaper (“De Oud-Katholiek”) in 1912-1913, which considered the Church of England, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of Ireland, the Church in Wales, the Episcopal Church in America, the Old Catholic Church, the Church of Finland and the Independent Philippine Church as sister churches of the Church of Sweden. In 1925, during the World Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm, the Swedish Church had opened the possibility for all participants to receive Holy Communion, including Anglicans and Old Catholics. In 1952 this was repeated at the Faith and Order Conference in Lund.

After World War II the Lambeth Conference of 1948 considered organizing meetings, at regular intervals, of bishops of churches which were, or could be, in communion with the bishops of the Anglican Communion. The idea of a “larger episcopal unity” was reaffirmed by the Lambeth Conferences in 1958 and 1968, now called “wider episcopal fellowship”. There was, however, only one such conference, held at Canterbury in 1964 with thirty nine bishops representing episcopally organized churches, mainly from Europe. The three archbishops of Canterbury, Utrecht and Uppsala read papers on episcopacy.

In 1951 the Old Catholic Church invited Archbishop Yngve Brilioth and Bishop Gustaf Aulén to a bishop’s consecration in Essen. They could not participate but sent two young priests to represent them. In 1953 Swedish participants were invited to the Old Catholic Conference in Munich. A Eucharist was celebrated according to the order of the Church of Sweden and a number of Old Catholics took part.

In 1960, at the Youth Conference of WCC in Lausanne, a proposal was made to open an official dialogue between the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches. The Church of Sweden again sent a representative to the Old Catholic Congress in Vienna in September 1965, and the archbishop of Uppsala sent the congress a telegram. With the prospect of the planned 20th Old Catholic Congress the wish was expressed, that the voice of the Church of Sweden would enrich the congress.

During this congress in 1965, the bishops of the Old Catholic Churches decided on full communion with the Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church, the Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Episcopal Church in Portugal and the Philippine Independent Church. As the relationship with the latter church developed, Old Catholics discovered the importance of a closer cooperation with the Church of Sweden, which in the meantime developed its own contacts with the Philippine Church leading to a concordat in 1994. The latter also signed a growing number of concordats of full communion with Anglican Churches, beginning with the Episcopal Church in America.

From 1977 onwards Old Catholic bishops now and then ordained deacons and priests for some congregations in Denmark and Sweden, mainly in Copenhagen and Malmö. At the start these small congregations largely consisted of former Lutherans, who were dissatisfied with modern tendencies in their former church, such as the ordination of women. They therefore strived for a catholic church that kept these modern phenomena at a distance. In the last decades however they changed in character to espouse an outspoken modern and inclusive theology. Though several efforts were made to establish sustainable ecclesial structures, these efforts proved unsuccessful. In 2013 there are still two small groups in Copenhagen and Malmö, which are under the supervision of the Old Catholic bishop of Haarlem.

In August 2003 the 38th International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference met in Elspeet, the Netherlands, at which Prof Sven-Erik Brodd lectured on the eucharist from a Lutheran perspective. The conference report stated that there are no significant differences between the three [i.e. Old Catholic, Anglican and Swedish Lutheran] understandings of the eucharist. All three traditions teach the real presence of Christ and the sacrificial character of the sacrament of the eucharist. The conference maintained “that in order to take up ecclesial communion, it is not enough to have a joint understanding of baptism, the eucharist and the ordained ministry (which was not specifically addressed) as isolated entities. Rather a common fundamental understanding of the church as a communion grounded in the triune God must be presupposed, for only then will baptism, the eucharist and the ordained ministry or, respectively, the elements of scripture and tradition, the ancient creeds, the sacraments and the office of bishop in apostolic succession find their place in the mystery of the church.”¹ The theologians' conference considered it desirable to establish relations with the Church of Sweden, since it was, like the Churches of the Union of Utrecht, in ecclesial communion with the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Philippine Independent Church.

Just prior to this theologians' conference, in April 2003 the archbishop of Utrecht, Joris Vercammen, had been invited to the consecration of two bishops in the Church of Sweden. In January 2004 he proposed – on behalf of the International Bishops' Conference of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht – an official dialogue with the Church of Sweden. This correspondence resulted in the official dialogue between the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht starting in 2005.

1 “Conclusions of the 38th International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference”, in: *IKZ* 93 (2003), pp. 207–208.

3 Presentation of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht

3.1 Historical development

The Union of Utrecht at present comprises seven churches, each of which is organized on an episcopal and synodical basis within the boundaries of a particular country. They are autonomous in their internal administration and share a central organ for common witness and mission in the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference (IBC). Members of the Union of Utrecht are at present the Old Catholic Churches in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland (both German- and French-speaking parishes), Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Poland. We may distinguish three groups on the basis of the historical background of their coming into existence as institutionally distinct churches: the Old Catholics in the Netherlands, those in the mainly German-speaking parts of Europe and those with a Slav origin. Other Old Catholic groups without synod or bishop exist in France (*Mission vieille-catholique en France*) as well as in Sweden (*Gammalkatolska Kyrkan i Sverige*) and Denmark (*Gammelkatolsk Kirke i Danmark*). They do not count as member churches of the Utrecht Union and are under the supervision of one of the bishops of the IBC. There are also many communities, especially in the English-speaking world, calling themselves in some way or other *Old Catholic* and claiming to stand in the episcopal succession stemming from the hierarchy of the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht. These churches and their bishops (often called *episcopi vagantes*) are not recognized as such by the churches of the Union of Utrecht. None of them belongs to the union and they are not involved in this dialogue, nor will they be affected by this agreement (this also applies to the Nordic Catholic Church, a body which has developed since 1990's and is now in union with the Polish National Catholic Church in North America).

3.1.1 The Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands

The Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands (*Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland*) regards itself as being in historical continuity with the Church of Utrecht founded in the 7th century by St. Willibrord and organized as a church province with the metropolitan see of Utrecht in 1559. Weakened by the reformation and the Dutch war of independence against the Spanish king, the church had to find a new (and often hidden) mode of life in the Calvinist republic. In this difficult and unclear situation, a debate arose between Rome and Utrecht, whether the Church of Utrecht headed by an apostolic vicar was a missionary church to be governed by the *Congregation de Propaganda Fide* in Rome or the continuation of the ancient see which preserved its ancient rights to govern itself. As this debate became influenced by controversy over interpretations of grace and ethics often termed Jansenism, it ended up in a breach between Rome and Utrecht in the early eighteenth century.

The majority of Catholics in the Dutch Republic accepted direct governance from Rome, whereas a minority held on to the ancient rights. The latter were called "the Church of Utrecht". It elected an archbishop of Utrecht, had him validly consecrated and appealed to a general council to defend its rights. Until this council might meet, Utrecht refrained from everything that would widen the gap that divided it from Rome. So the Church of Utrecht stayed very close to the tradition of counter-reformation Roman Catholicism both in faith and order, as can be seen in its still official name: "The Roman Catholic Church of the Old Episcopal Clergy". Even

after the pronouncement of the dogmatic definitions of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854 and papal infallibility and universal jurisdiction in 1870 by Rome, the Church of Utrecht only hesitantly got into contact with the Old Catholic movement in Germany and Switzerland. Today the Dutch Church has two bishops: the archbishop of Utrecht and the bishop of Haarlem. A new Roman Catholic hierarchy was established in Holland only in 1853.

3.1.2 The Old Catholic Churches in Germany, Switzerland and the Habsburg Monarchy

The Old Catholic Churches in Germany (*Katholisches Bistum der Alt-Katholiken in Deutschland*), Switzerland (*Christkatholische Kirche der Schweiz*), and the Habsburg Monarchy (for the present names see below) go back to the refusal of Catholics of a long-standing politically liberal outlook to accept the conception of the church as it found expression in the two decrees of the First Vatican Council in 1870 on the universal jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome and his infallibility as supreme teacher in matters of faith and morals. Being excommunicated they were to organize churches that were no longer under the obedience of the pope. This resulted in the creation of diocesan synods and the consecration of a bishop elected by the synod. The protest has been linked from the very beginning with the intention of reform and reunion on the basis of the faith and life of the ancient undivided church, which explains the name Old Catholic.

While in Germany and Switzerland the organization of the church was completed in 1871-1874 and 1871-1876 respectively, the Old Catholics in the Habsburg Empire were not allowed by the state authorities to have a bishop consecrated; so they had to be content with a diocesan administrator. After the collapse of the Habsburg Empire two autonomous churches, now each with a bishop, were established in Czechoslovakia and Austria (now *Altkatholische Kirche Österreichs*).

The Church in Czechoslovakia was predominately of German origin (*Altkatholische Kirche in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik*). Its German members were forced to leave Bohemia after the end of World War II. The remaining Czech-speaking church (now *Starokatolická Církev v České Republice*) has its roots in an effort around 1900 to found a national “czecho-slavic” church claiming to stand in the tradition both of Cyril and Methodius, who brought the faith to the Slavs, and of John Huss, the Bohemian reformer. Their ideational continuity with the second group, to which they formally belong, is equivocal.

These four churches consist of one diocese each.

3.1.3 The Old Catholic Churches of Slav origin

The other Old Catholic churches of Slav origins do not owe their organization to the controversies over the First Vatican Council, but are the result of a wish to live with a distinct ethnic and national identity within the Catholic Church, which the Roman authorities were unable to concede. Towards the end of the 19th century a number of independent-minded communities emerged among Polish emigrants in the USA. Two different groups were established in Chicago, Illinois, and Scranton, Pennsylvania, which merged into the Polish National Catholic Church in the USA and Canada (PNCC). They had their bishops consecrated by the European Old Catholic churches. This church left the Union of Utrecht in 2003 because of its refusal to be in communion with those Old Catholic Churches that introduced the ordination of women to the priesthood.

After World War I the PNCC started a mission in Poland then enjoying a new national independence. The missionary diocese erected in 1924 became an autonomous church in 1951 and the consecration of its first bishop (signifying his being a member of the IBC) took place in 1959. Today the Polish National Church (*Kościół Polskokatolicki w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*) comprises three dioceses.

In 1909 a bishop was consecrated for the Church of the Mariavites in Poland. This church originated at the end of the 19th century as a reform movement within the Polish Roman Catholic Church. As Rome declined their request for acknowledgement, the Mariavites turned to Utrecht. In 1924 the relationship was broken off, because of so-called mystical marriages between Mariavite priests and nuns. This church split and one part, distancing itself from those practices, seeks to be reunited to the Union of Utrecht and is in an official dialogue with the Churches of the Union of Utrecht.

In Yugoslavia an Old Catholic Church was organized among the Croats in 1923, and a bishop was consecrated at Utrecht a year later. The history of this church has been rather confusing and has been a continual source of difficulties for the other bishops of the union. Today the Croatian Catholic Church (*Hrvatska Katolička Crkva*) after having suffered severe losses during World War II has been without a bishop since 1974 and is limited to a few parishes, one of them in Bosnia.

3.1.4 The Union of Utrecht and its theology

The Union of Utrecht came into existence on 24th September 1889, when the three Dutch bishops and the bishops of the Old Catholic Churches in Germany and Switzerland declared “that the churches headed and represented by them are in full ecclesial communion with each other“. Later the administrator of the Austrian diocese was accepted into the union. This nucleus of the union was the result of the consolidation of the German and Swiss Old Catholic Churches and of a growing understanding within the Dutch Church for the objectives of Old Catholic policy as laid down in the decisions of the important first three Old Catholic congresses held in Germany 1871-1873. After 1897 bishops and churches of the third group mentioned above, i.e. of Slav origins (see 3.1.3) were admitted to the union as member churches.

The setting up of the Union of Utrecht in 1889 resulted in what might be called the Old Catholic mainstream theology manifesting a marked closeness to Orthodox and Anglican ecclesiology. The leading centres of theological reflection were and still are the Faculty (now Department) of Old Catholic Theology in the University of Berne and the Seminaries at Amersfoort (now Utrecht and linked with the University of Utrecht) and Bonn (connected with the University of Bonn).

The Old Catholic Churches of Slav origin have hardly participated in the formation of a distinct Old Catholic theology. In recent times however a considerable number of Old Catholic theological contributions have been translated into Polish; to a lesser degree this may be said for the Czech situation. In these countries Old Catholic clergy receive their theological education in the Old Catholic section of the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw and in the Hussite Faculty of Theology at the Charles University in Prague.

3.2 The significance of protest and reform for Old Catholic self-understanding

The reasons for the split within the Catholic Church after the First Vatican Council were succinctly spelled out in 1874 by Ignaz von Döllinger in Munich, who was the leading figure of the anti-infallibilist opposition to that council and who can therefore be regarded as the classical proponent (*spiritus rector*) of the traditional Old Catholic ecclesial policy:

- *Protest* (against the innovations of Vatican I, which stem from the same centralizing tendency causing the break in the Netherlands earlier),
- *Reform* (taking the criteria from the undivided church),
- *Reunion* (thus in a way anticipating what later became manifest in the ecumenical movement).

The second and the third point are in many ways interrelated and still significant, while the first point has, as a result of the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church connected with the Second Vatican Council, lost its acute anti-Roman edge.

In the Old Catholic Churches, protest and reform have been justified with the claim of continuing the catholic tradition of the faith. This implied a rejection of unjustified innovations, usually with an appeal to the ancient church. During the 17th and 18th century the Dutch Old Catholics opposed conciliar ideals, based upon this ancient church, to the centralization of church power in the Roman curia and the denial of the rights of the local church of Utrecht. For the German-speaking Old Catholics in the 19th century the influence of the Catholic Enlightenment and of parliamentary democracy was predominant. The appeal to the ancient church did not imply a repetition of the past but rather a reorientation to the origins of the church.

The ordination of women to the priesthood is an example of “reform” that in fact can be seen as an innovation compared to the order and discipline of the ancient church. The theological rationale for this however will amongst other things refer to the basic dogmatic truth that the incarnate Son of God assumed the human nature that is common to male and female. This truth obtains a new significance in a society where the androcentric idea of humankind is disintegrating. Thus, the change of mentality of the “world” (or the *Zeitgeist*) can launch (and has launched) a process of discernment which leads to a deeper understanding of the truth. This process can be considered an example of Old Catholic theology as mentioned before.

Some modifications in the life and discipline of the church are common to all the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht. When they were introduced, these reforms made a noticeable difference in relation to the majority Roman Catholic Church in the west: the use of the vernacular for the liturgy; the establishment of an episcopal-synodical organisation; the participation of the laity in the liturgy and government of the church; abolition of compulsory confession before communion and of obligatory celibacy for clergy etc.

A further item of reform is the liturgy of the eucharist, the daily office and the administration of the sacraments, as they are presented in the various prayer and hymn books of each Old Catholic member church. They manifest greater or smaller similarities in their general outline, because they all reflect the insights of the inter-denominational liturgical movement in the western churches. A special place must be given to the Liturgy of the Ordination to the Threefold Ministry (office of bishops, presbyters/priests and deacons): it has been common to the member

churches since the 1980's and shows a renewed understanding of the synodical character of the local church and its communion with other local churches.

In details, however, there may be variations among the member churches of the union. Due to the different historical developments and the national settings of the churches, there is no single church order (*Kirchenverfassung*), nor a union wide canon law. Thus the members of a synod may have either a deciding or only a deliberative vote, and the bishop may be elected by a synod composed of laity and clergy or only by the clergy assembly. The same is true for liturgical reform, because the extent and the way in which the member churches in the 20th century adopted the insights of the interdenominational Liturgical Movement varies. Similar observations can be made for eucharistic or Marian devotion.

In view of the tension between the differences in traditions and characteristics of the local churches and their common concern for Old Catholicism it is the task of the IBC to maintain unity. Successful initiatives were the creation of a common eucharistic prayer and the ordination rite of bishops, priests and deacons.

3.3 Foundational documents of the Union of Utrecht

In 1889, the Old Catholic bishops and their churches joining together in the Union of Utrecht recorded their intentions in three foundational documents, together known as the *Convention of Utrecht*:

- 1) The “Utrecht Declaration”, setting out the theological principles, based on the faith and order of the ancient church, of their witness and ecumenical mission, together with a repudiation of the dogmas of 1854 and 1870 and a self-commitment to work for the restoration of the unity and communion of churches on the said basis.
- 2) the “Utrecht Agreement” expressing the ecclesial communion of the churches forming the Union of Utrecht and specifying a few rules for maintaining the communion;
- 3) the “Regulations” stating the rules of procedure of the International Bishops’ Conference, which is to assemble at regular intervals and is chaired by the archbishop of Utrecht.

The Utrecht Declaration as the main historical document has never been changed, whereas the two other documents have been revised, finally resulting in the *Statute of the Old Catholic Bishops United in the Union of Utrecht* (2000),² whose preamble expounds the ecclesiological vision of Old Catholicism and its principles. Each bishop of the Union of Utrecht is obliged to sign the Statute, which includes the Utrecht Declaration.

3.4 Episcopacy, synodality and the ordained ministry

The common understanding of episcopacy in its inherent relation with the synodality of the church is expressed in the liturgical texts of the consecration rite and described in the aforementioned preamble of the *Statute of the Old Catholic Bishops’ Conference*.

2 Cf. *Statut der Internationalen Altkatholischen Bischofskonferenz (IBK). Offizielle Ausgabe in fünf Sprachen*, ed. Urs von Arx/Maja Weyermann, Bern 2001 [= supplementary issue to IKZ 2001]; see pp. 28-42 for the English translation.

Bishops have a double belonging and responsibility. As they are synodically elected in the local church, they belong to this church. At the same time, through their consecration by bishops of other churches, they become members of the synod or conference of bishops, and this synodical body is the institutional expression of the communion of the respective local churches.

Episcopacy is part of the threefold apostolic ministry: bishop, presbyter (usually called priest) and deacon. This internal differentiation of the one (ordained) ministry is the outcome of developments in the first two or three centuries of the church. Though Old Catholics acknowledge the fact that this ministry underwent great fluctuations in the course of history, it is considered to be as binding as the canon of Holy Scripture, the creeds of the ancient church (ie.the Niceno-Constantinopolitan as well as the Apostolic) and the nascent conciliar system of common witness and decision-making of the church.

Presbyters/priests and deacons share in the ministry of the bishop within the local church (diocese). For example: to preside at the eucharist is a primary task of the bishop, which is usually delegated to the presbyter in the parish.

Traditionally Old Catholics have only known the *transitional* diaconate, which still is prescribed for candidates to the priesthood and thus never drew much attention. The discussion to find a consistent and distinct role for the *permanent* diaconate, which the IBC had established for men and women in the 1980's, is still in its initial phase.

In most of the member churches the threefold ministry is open to both men and women. The difference in practice is considered not to be church-dividing. The first woman deacon was ordained in 1986 (Switzerland), the first woman priest in 1996 (Germany).

Old Catholics embrace the concept of the threefold episcopate, as introduced by the document of the Faith and Order Commission of WCC, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) in 1982, and continued in the commission's recent document *The Church – Towards a Common Vision* in 2012³: within the local church the bishop exercises a personal episcopate, with the presbytery (and the deacons) a collegial episcopate, with the baptized who are not ordained (for instance in a synod) a communal episcopate. They are all part of a network of mutual and joint responsibilities for the mission of the church.

It is in the national church, be it a single local church (i.e. a diocese such as in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the Czech Republic) or a communion of local churches (i.e. the dioceses of the church province of Utrecht in the Netherlands or the dioceses in Poland), that Old Catholics perceive aspects of the synodality of the church in an immediate way. The institution of a synod, consisting of lay delegates of each parish and of (all or especially elected) members of the ordained ministry, is the realization of one of the main objectives of reform in the 1870's, as it was stated in the Program of the first Old Catholic Congress at Munich in 1871: "We aim at a reform in the church ...which in the spirit of the ancient church will remedy the grievances and abuses of our time and will especially fulfill the legitimate aspirations of the Catholic people to participate in a constitutionally ordered way in church affairs." There are various types of such synodical bodies in the Old Catholic Churches: the Diocesan Synods on the one hand, the General Synod (in Poland) and the "Collegial Bestuur" with only a consultative synod (in the Netherlands) on the

3 Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper 111, Geneva 1982, §§ 26f (M); *The Church – Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper 214, Geneva 2013, § 52.

other, and the exact position of the bishop(s) vis-à-vis the synod(s) and executive and administrative bodies such as a synodical council (with clerical and lay members) may vary. The general principle of participation in religious matters is not restricted to synods in the strict sense.

The IBC does not have jurisdiction over the member churches with their episcopal-synodical polity and it has no legal right to interfere in their autonomous administration, but it is the organ of the witness to the truth enshrined in the apostolic tradition and of the maintenance of the unity of the Old Catholic Church as a communion of national churches. The Union of Utrecht is to some extent analogous to the Anglican Communion with its autonomous provinces or the Orthodox Church with its autocephalous churches, although the majority of the national Old Catholic Churches are single dioceses, and the IBC is the one organ obliged and entitled to speak for the Union of Utrecht.

The IBC is responsible for a number of tasks (cf. the Order of the said Statute):

- 1) taking the necessary decisions in all organizational or disciplinary matters concerning the maintenance of communion and the implementation of joint projects;
- 2) taking a stand in controversial questions of faith and related ethical behaviours as well as in church order;
- 3) making statements on faith and principles in the name of the Union of Utrecht, if required;
- 4) ordering the relationships with other churches and religious bodies;
- 5) accepting a church into the Union of Utrecht and thus a bishop into the IBC.

In order to accomplish its task, a two-way process of discernment between the IBC and the member churches is necessary in order to safeguard the communion and its common witness and mission, which is a primary responsibility of the individual bishops as representatives of the local churches in the conference, and as representatives of the conference in the local churches.

Contrary to what is sometimes asserted the Union of Utrecht as well as its Bishops' Conference is definitely a body sharing mutual obligations of a legal character (it is a *Rechtsgemeinschaft*), but it does not present itself as a super-diocese or as a metropolitan entity nor is the IBC something like a collective metropolitan.

There are other bodies of a union-wide composition that are important in terms of opinion making on theological, ecumenical and spiritual issues and concerns for Old Catholics, such as the "International Old Catholic Congress" (assembling every four years), the 'International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference' (meeting every year) etc. The *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* (IKZ) is the traditional scholarly forum for presenting historical research and promoting theological debate on Old Catholic concerns, also inviting contributors from other Christian traditions.

3.5 Ecumenical concerns and achievements

As all the Old Catholic Churches emerged from inner-church conflicts, the wish to overcome these has always been there. In this way the Dutch Church appealed to a general council to defend her rights as a local church against the usurpation of

authority by the Roman curia. During the 19th century the German-speaking Old Catholics were in what today would be termed ecumenical contacts with other churches before their own church organization was implemented with the election and consecration of a bishop and the constitution of a synod. The clearest response to the declaration of this intention came from the traditions that in their own ways also valued the ancient church: the Orthodox and the Anglican. In 1872 an Old Catholic Union Committee was set up, which met with semi-official representatives of these two churches to determine the principles of reunion work. All of these principles reflect the fundamental importance of the faith of what was perceived as the one church founded and willed by Christ, the church of the ecumenical councils and the common fathers. To find out what belonged to the common heritage it was agreed to apply discriminately the Vincentian canon with the triple test of ecumenicity, antiquity and consent (“id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est, hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum”). Therefore, the Old Catholic Church has been seen by others as a bridge-building church.

It is in this context the two so-called Reunion Conferences of Bonn in 1874 and 1875 were organized. Although Lutheran and Reformed theologians were also present at these conferences, the response of churches from these traditions was weak. However, Protestant and Old Catholic Christians for a long time shared a feeling of belonging together in the face of what was considered to be a common adversary, the Roman Catholic Church, with its 19th century centralizing tendency.

3.5.1 Relationships with the Anglican Churches

The first two or three decades after 1870 saw many signs of rapprochement between individual Old Catholic Churches and Anglicans: statements of sympathy of varied official status on the part of the Lambeth Conferences of 1878, 1888, and also later; the offer of eucharistic hospitality on the part of the German Church; even a declaration of being in communion with the “Anglo-American” church by the Swiss Church etc. The constitution of the Union of Utrecht in 1889 curbed the dynamics. It was only in 1925 that the Dutch Church was prepared to recognize the validity of Anglican orders. After that, the way was paved for what became the *Bonn Agreement* of 1931, which is the formal basis of “intercommunion” – a term that was altered to “full communion” around 1960 – between the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Union of Utrecht.⁴

The will to find a common way and the growing mutual trust resulted over the years in an ecclesial communion with many forms of exchanges (youth groups, theologians’ conferences, mutual participation in episcopal ordinations, etc.), which in 1999 was institutionalized with the establishment of the Anglican – Old Catholic International Co-ordinating Council (AOCICC), which meets regularly. For various reasons ecclesial communion does not include a common *episcopé* to overcome the somewhat irregular state of overlapping jurisdictions in Europe, nor are the Old Catholics in communion with all the other churches that for the last thirty years or so have been in (“full” or “partial”) communion with parts of the Anglican Communion

4 The text of the Bonn Agreement of 1931 is best accessible in: *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level* (ed. Harding Meyer/Lukas Vischer), New York/Geneva 1984, p.37. See also “Belonging together in Europe – A Joint Statement on Aspects of Ecclesiology and Mission by the Anglican Old Catholic International Coordinating Council”, in *IKZ* 102 (2012), pp. 140-158.

in Europe or elsewhere – with the exception of the Philippine Independent Church: In 1965 the Bonn Agreement was extended to this church as well as to the Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church (both of which are now under the metropolitan authority of the archbishop of Canterbury and thus belong to the Anglican Communion). Yet, for many Old Catholics the relationship with members of the worldwide Anglican Communion is an experience they would not want to be without.

3.5.2 Relationships with the Orthodox Churches

The contacts with the Orthodox established in the 1870's continued, but gained a more official dimension after the constitution of the Union of Utrecht. In the 1890's a theological dialogue was initiated between with the Russian Orthodox Church and the Union: two commissions several times exchanged their findings on issues like the *filioque*, the theology of the eucharist and the validity of Old-Catholic orders. World War I and the Russian Revolution brought this process of rapprochement to an end. A new initiative, now under the leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was started in the 1920's. From an Old Catholic perspective, the result of the meeting of a mixed dialogue commission again at Bonn in 1931 – some weeks after the conclusion of the Bonn Agreement with the Anglicans – was expected to lead to a similar “intercommunion” with the Orthodox in a trilateral context, thus implementing the hopes of the 1870's. This proved to be unrealistic. The next phase of the Old Catholic – Orthodox dialogue – now at last including all the Orthodox churches – began in the 1960's and was conducted in a well prepared and coherent way. In 1975-1987 it produced twenty six agreed statements (each time explicitly stating a consensus), which cover the main dogmatic issues, while placing special emphasis on ecclesiology.⁵ It was the most engaging theological dialogue the Old Catholics were ever committed to, and it is still the only dialogue of the Orthodox with a western church that was brought to its scheduled conclusion. For various reasons the hope for ecclesial communion has not yet been achieved. Comparing the wording of the Bonn Agreement with the last consensus text on “Ecclesial Communion: Presuppositions and Consequences”, which in their objectives correspond to one another, may well confirm the impression of some observers that the Old Catholics were possibly led to follow a dogmatically minimalist policy with the Anglicans (hardly mentioning theological issues in the Bonn Agreement) and a maximalist one with the Orthodox (spelling out detailed texts of theological agreement).

Be this as it may, the ecclesial communion existing between Anglicans and Old Catholics appears to be one of the two repeatedly stated obstacles to the implementation of a unity without uniformity; the other is the recent Old Catholic adoption of the practice of ordaining women to the priesthood.

Notwithstanding the fact that the synods or other authoritative bodies of all the Old Catholic churches have adopted the main objective of the dialogue texts in the 1990's, there is a certain impasse in the relationship, which has not quite been overcome by the working group set up in 2003 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the IBC, commissioned to stimulate common pastoral and theological projects on a local and regional level.

5 Cf. *Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Grundlage. Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der gemeinsamen Texte des orthodox-alkatholischen Dialogs 1975-1987 mit französischer und englischer Übersetzung*, ed. Urs von Arx, Bern 1989 [=supplementary issue to IKZ 1989]; see pp. 173-229 for the English translation.

3.5.3 Relationships with the Roman Catholic Church

The mutually strained and often overtly polemical relations, which were the consequence of the various instances of schism within the western Catholic Church, have gradually given way to dialogue and to the consciousness of after all belonging to the same family. The change is connected with Vatican II, at which Old Catholics were invited to take part as observers. Impediments to dialogue between Utrecht and Rome stemming from the so-called Jansenist controversy of the 17th and 18th centuries having been removed, an official dialogue between the two churches could begin. It was conducted on a national level (in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland), but was co-ordinated and supported by the Pontifical Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the IBC. Its immediate goal was an agreement of mutual pastoral help in well-defined emergency situations. Although a remarkable consensus on several theological issues came to light, the concrete goal was not achieved. For a while some of the national bilateral dialogue commissions continued their work, but a substantial new start was only possible after the turn of the century. This time an international joint commission was established in 2003 by the IBC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Within five years it produced its report,⁶ which is in its first stage of critical discernment and reception in the two churches. On the basis of a so-called *communio*-ecclesiology and using the method of differentiated consensus and taking account of other bilateral dialogues and of ecumenical convergence texts, the joint commission came to the conclusion that a form of ecclesial communion appears to be possible. Remaining questions, which however do not annul the fundamental consensus in the understanding of the faith and the church, require further dialogue. These are for instance the exact nature of the primacy of the bishop of Rome in the framework of a worldwide communion of local churches; the Marian dogmas of 1854 and 1950; and the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood.

3.5.4 Relationships with Lutheran and other Protestant Churches

On local or national levels friendly contacts between Old Catholics and Protestant Churches have been a constant feature in the history of European Old Catholicism (in earlier times nurtured by a common anti-Romanism), but so far this has never really led to a consistent theological dialogue with the goal of ecclesial communion.⁷

In the context of dialogues which churches of the Anglican Communion had begun with Lutheran and other Protestant churches in Europe, the Old Catholic side got indirectly involved in contacts with the latter. The IBC was kept informed about the process leading to the Porvoo Common Statement (1992) and the establishment of communion between the respective British/Irish Anglican and the Nordic/Baltic Lutheran Churches. An Old Catholic observer (from Germany) participated in the process leading to the Meissen Common Statement between the Church of England and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (1988). Currently, there is an Old Catholic observer in the Anglican – Lutheran International Commission (ALIC).

⁶ *Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft. Bericht der Internationalen Römisch-Katholisch – Altkatholischen Dialogkommission*, Paderborn/Frankfurt 2009. (The publication of an English translation is forthcoming in *Growth in Agreement IV*, Geneva/Grand Rapids MI)

⁷ The agreement on mutual eucharistic hospitality, drawn up in 1985 between the German Old Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany, does not commit the Union of Utrecht.

For the Old Catholics, the dialogue of the Union of Utrecht with the Church of Sweden is the first one conducted with a church that – from an Old Catholic perspective – in an unequivocal or differentiated way belongs to the Reformation churches, because with respect to the Anglican Communion the prevailing Old Catholic perspective still follows the broad Anglo-Catholic self-understanding in seeing the *Ecclesia Anglicana* as a church that is, though reformed and thus free from abuses, catholic in all its essentials. Whatever the pertinence of such distinctions, the Old Catholic side started the present dialogue with a certain expectation to find in the Church of Sweden an analogous manifestation of a catholic church shaped by the reformation.

3.5.5 The Significance of Faith and Order in the ecumenical movement

The early Faith and Order movement (and later the Commission of Faith and Order as part of the WCC) was warmly welcomed by Old Catholics, since the efforts and goals of this particular type of ecumenical work corresponded best to the focus on theology of the Old Catholic ecumenical commitment. The Old Catholic Churches participated right from the start in 1948 in the work of WCC and usually one of the Old Catholic bishops is a member of its governing body. Achievements like the *BEM* document of 1982 or *The Church. Towards a Common Vision* of 2012 are appreciated and as far as possible correlated with the insights stemming from bilateral theological dialogues with Old Catholic participation.

3.6 The life of the church

However small the Old Catholic Churches are and however much specific historical developments mark each local church, several common characteristics can be mentioned that apply to all of them.

The main characteristic of the Old Catholic Churches is that they are celebrating communities. The eucharist and other forms of worship are the base of each local church. Distinct witnessing and serving activities have been secondary activities in most Old Catholic Churches for a long time. They were always there in forms of pastoral care and diaconal work, but usually consisted in private actions by individual church members. During the last decades a growing awareness of the importance of witnessing and serving has led to new initiatives.

The ministry of teaching has been in focus in recent decades. More modern catechetical methods have been developed and many churches practise some form of catechesis for adults.

3.6.1 A celebrating church

As has been said, each Old Catholic Church is a celebrating church focussing on the eucharist. In this celebration, always on Sundays, but in several places also on weekdays, all members of the community participate equally and experience the partaking in the Body of Christ. Given the common western catholic structure of the liturgy in the different local churches, mutual recognition is possible, even if the liturgy is celebrated in different languages. By their liturgical tradition Old Catholics are connected to their ancestors in faith. The centre has always been the eucharist, but most of the other sacraments are foci of church life as well

As a rule, there are three readings and a sermon in a celebration of the eucharist (liturgy of the mass). The participation of the people is earnest and concentrated.

The weekly services follow the liturgical year, centred round Lent-Eastertide and Advent-Christmastide. Other annual feasts, mostly those commemorating the saints, are celebrated as they occur. Old Catholics were hardly ever drawn to extra-liturgical devotions like pilgrimages or rosary prayer. The same can be said about the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Still, there can be exceptions. In for instance Poland, more popular sacramental and specifically Marian devotional traditions can be found.

Personal practice of prayer is to a large extent shaped and passed on by family traditions. Efforts are being made to reintegrate daily liturgical prayer into parish life.

3.6.2 A witnessing church

Each Old Catholic Church is a learning community. However small the local parishes are, people gather regularly to study the Bible or to discuss ecclesial or social questions. Every parish priest has his/her duties in the education of young people or those who come from other churches (or nowadays from no church at all) to join the Old Catholics. Learning also concerns ecumenical contacts on the level of the parish. Usually every parish is active in a local ecumenical council of churches or even in an interreligious dialogue group. Individual piety is stimulated by publications (printed or digital) and prayer books.

Especially in urban areas, an important portion of the active members are originally not Old Catholics, but have found a new home in the Old Catholic Church. This means that these communities are somehow present and attractive. Many parishes work on being an inviting community. In consequence, not only in theory, but also in practice every liturgical act has a witnessing element.

A second form of common witnessing consists in the passing on of Christian tradition to the next generation by catechesis and other forms of religious instruction.

On a more personal level, taking a stand in debates for a Christian point of view is also a form of witnessing. This is rarely done as church or by church media. The Old Catholic Churches have limited possibilities in this field because of their minority position.

3.6.3 A serving church

Each Old Catholic Church has its diaconal projects. The Churches of the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland have their national committees, which also internationally work together in setting up projects which help people worldwide to improve their standards of living. Parishes are also active in supporting their own projects or work together in ecumenical organizations.

An evident but essential way of serving is pastoral care in its broadest sense, either professionally by ministers or voluntarily by members of the parish. More recent are initiatives to find connections and to build up a network in the local neighbourhood.

Small communities must limit themselves to modest projects, except when they cooperate with other churches. That is a positive option and helpful for the building of ecumenical contacts. On the international level there is cooperation too in this field.

Even if many projects are small, it is still remarkable what small parishes achieve, in view of the need to maintain church buildings and vicarages.

In the diaconate, the Old Catholic Churches would benefit from cooperation with the Church of Sweden, by learning from their experience and by joint projects.

4 Presentation of the Church of Sweden

4.1 Historical development

It would not be possible to describe the whole history of the Church of Sweden in a document of this sort. This presentation is simply a sketch of three major periods that have formed this church. Clearly much more could be said and the history could be presented in other ways.

4.1.1 Medieval origins

The Church in Sweden originated as a part of the medieval western church. The first recorded missionary presence in Sweden was already in the 9th century. More lasting contacts with Christianity developed during the Viking era of the 10th and 11th centuries. On their travels Swedes encountered both the western and eastern traditions of the church. There was an early Orthodox presence in Sweden. But the decisive missionary influence came from the British Isles, France and Northern Germany.

At first Sweden was under the jurisdiction of the archbishop in Lund, which at the time was part of Denmark. The selection of Uppsala as the seat of an archbishop in 1164 signified a breakthrough for Christianity in Sweden. The church became a strong indigenous institution, closely linked with the crown and the nobility. Counties had their own laws which reflected considerable regional independence, to a certain extent even in relation to canon law. There was a high degree of lay responsibility in the local parishes.

The most famous Swede in the church of the middle ages was St Bridget (1303 - 1373), the only canonized Swede. She was a mystic and founder of the dual Order of the Most Holy Saviour with its centre at Vadstena (with both nuns and monks in different sections of the same monastery). Bridget herself lived in Rome for more than twenty years. She used her extraordinary spiritual and political gifts as an outspoken critic of abuses of both worldly and papal power, and she tried persistently to persuade the pope to return from Avignon to Rome.

4.1.2 Reformation in Sweden

From the end of the 14th century the Nordic countries were united, but when the union king, Christian II of Denmark, had two bishops executed in Stockholm in 1520 a movement for national liberation, both from the union and from the pope, began. The leader of the insurrection, Gustavus Vasa, was crowned king of Sweden in 1523. The new monarch received ideological support for the break with Rome and for the creation of a national Swedish church from theologians, for example the brothers Olavus and Laurentius Petri, who had studied in Germany. The Swedish reformers were cautious: much of the old structure and order was retained, unless perceived as superstition or false belief. Though most of the sees were vacant, the apostolic succession was transmitted to a new generation of bishops approved by the king. In 1531 Laurentius Petri was appointed as the first archbishop of Uppsala during the reformation.

The reformation brought with it new books and practices: in 1530 it was decided that the mass should be celebrated in the vernacular; the New Testament was published in Swedish in 1526, and the whole Bible in 1541; in 1543/44 a Swedish hymnal and lectionary appeared, and a new church ordinance was finally ratified in 1571. A convocation in Uppsala in 1593 finally and formally decreed that the Church of Sweden had severed its ties with Rome and based its confession on the

Bible, the three classic creeds, the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and the Ordinance of 1571.

Church practice and spiritual life in the local parishes continued much the same in the local churches, which had been built by the parishioners in 12th-15th century. They were not despoiled by iconoclasm. Church buildings remained relatively unchanged as did their liturgical function. In some areas certain medieval practices and popular religiosity continued into the nineteenth century. The diocesan structures were preserved as was the office of bishop.

Although the Swedish reformation was theologically and liturgically moderate, under the impact of Lutheran Orthodoxy in the 17th century the church took on a more distinctive confessional Lutheran character amidst fierce controversy. The monarch was seen as responsible for enforcing the law of God, as Sweden increasingly became a major power through its role in the religious wars in Europe. This period is known as “the era of the great bishops” because of their great influence on both church and state.

The first church law that codified reformation practice and theology was adopted in 1686, reflecting the consolidation of Lutheran orthodoxy as it had developed after the Thirty Years War. Lutheran doctrine and catechism were used for creating social cohesion amongst the diverse ethnic and linguistic groups around the Baltic Sea. Religious and social uniformity was promoted and foreigners, who for some reason lived in Sweden and who did not subscribe to the Augsburg Confession, were obliged to worship in private.

4.1.3 The Church of Sweden and increasing pluralism

In the 18th and 19th centuries a number of pietistic and revivalist movements challenged Lutheran Orthodoxy. The authorities reacted strongly. In 1726 the so-called “Conventicle Edict” was issued, prohibiting worship in private groups. During the 19th century the parish church with its public Sunday service was still regarded as the natural focus of a predominantly rural life. Clergy still exercised great influence on people, not only through catechism but as being responsible for schools and social welfare. Some revival movements remained within the church, such as the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Others left and formed their own congregations joining into “free” denominations. This was a result of tensions with the official church leadership, but there were also theological reasons for splitting the church, such as different understandings of the atonement, adult baptism, lay leadership of the eucharist, and a “pure” communion table. Freedom of religion gradually increased. In 1784 a public Roman Catholic service was allowed in Stockholm for the first time since the reformation. The Conventicle Edict was repealed in 1858. From 1860 Swedish citizens could leave the Church of Sweden, as long as they became members of another denomination recognized by the state, but it was not until 1951 that full freedom of religion was guaranteed by law for everyone.

The church played during these centuries an important role in increasing literacy through encouraging Bible reading and the use of the hymn book, as well as teaching the catechism. It was involved in the development of a basic school (*folkskolan*). In these ways it contributed to the gradual improvement of the status of ordinary people.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Church of Sweden seemed to be losing ground, with the increase of free churches and nascent secularization with a resultant decrease in church practice in many parts of the country. The early 20th century, however, witnessed a profound renewal of the Church of Sweden. It regained self-

confidence and developed through the so-called Young Church Movement (*ungkyrklighet*) a greater interest in Swedish history, not least its medieval history, national concerns and the idea of a “folk church” (*folkkyrkotanken*), which connected to the development in the political context of the idea of the “folk home” (*folkhem*) as the basis of the welfare system in society.

At the same time international dimensions became significant in the church. It became strongly involved in ecumenical and missionary work. At the universities of Uppsala and Lund, exegetical and systematic theology gained international reputation, and Lund became the centre of a renaissance of Luther studies. There was a growing interest in questions of ecclesiology. A high church movement, inspired by Anglo-Catholicism, enriched liturgical life and strengthened the ‘catholicity’ of the church.

As Sweden remained outside World War II, the post-war church was materially well off. But it was affected by increasing secularization and decreasing church attendance. Demography changed, urbanization accelerated, agriculture decreased and innovative and heavy industry flourished. City parishes started to build small district churches and parish houses. Professional lay workers were increasingly employed, and the parish councils and voluntary organizations took on new activities directed at different age groups.

Liturgy and theology were influenced by a number of movements within the churches at large, for instance liturgical renewal and ecumenism, liberation and feminist theology, and international involvement. Sweden has in the late 20th century and into the 21st seen a remarkable renewal of hymnology, in ecumenical circles sometimes called the “hymn explosion of Sweden”.

Separation between church and state had been on the political agenda for decades, and was discussed in the church throughout the later 20th century. There were structural and financial complications, and varying theological and political groupings influenced the process. In the year 2000 the church ceased to be a state church, which in fact meant an adjustment of relations rather than a radical separation. The Swedish constitution obliges the church to maintain its outreach and serve people in the entire country. But for the first time since the reformation, the church regulates its own life by its own church ordinance, not determined by the state. This ordinance includes theological introductions to major sections and key chapters, which is a novelty in Swedish ecclesiastical legislation. Despite a large increase of other faiths, dwindling church attendance, and a small but steady defection, some 70 % of all Swedish citizens remain members of the Church of Sweden. All church members pay a small percentage of their income as an obligatory church-membership fee collected through the tax system. In surveys about what motivates people to remain members and pay the fee, the most common answers are: diaconal work, international aid, the role of the church in personal and general crisis, the desire to maintain and keep churches open for people to visit, and the more general role of the church in society and culture, not least with its rich musical and choral life. There is an obvious need for public sacred spaces and signs of transcendence. The Church of Sweden is an open folk church inviting all who are baptized to participate in communion. With such large numbers of members, it still has a comparatively solid financial base.

4.2 The significance of reformation for the self-understanding of the Church of Sweden

Protest and reform were historically an essential reason for the reformation movement, of which the church in Sweden became a part. This does not, however, mean that protest and reform have been a continuing dimension of the church or a characteristic theological/ecclesiological trait. Nor has the ideal of the undivided church, though seen as one significant model, been adopted without ecclesiological qualification.

The official designation of the Church of Sweden today in Swedish constitutional law (*Lagen om Svenska kyrkan*) is

“...an Evangelical Lutheran faith community (*trossamfund*) manifested in parishes and dioceses. The Church of Sweden also has a national organisation.” (§ 1)

“...an open folk church, which, working with a democratic organisation and through the ministry of the church, covers the whole nation.” (§ 2)

The term Lutheran or Evangelical Lutheran was however not introduced as a characteristic description of the Church of Sweden until the 19th century. It was not in fact until 1982 that the Church of Sweden was called Evangelical Lutheran in an official text. Lutheran indicates that this church adheres to the reformation interpretation of the Christian faith originating with Martin Luther and formulated in the Lutheran confessional writings, which as was the intention of the Augsburg Confession, are today increasingly seen as expressions of the catholic faith understood in an ecumenical sense. Evangelical means a fundamental emphasis on the gospel of grace. As the word of God the Bible is recognised as the corrective principle of all doctrine (*norma normans*).

Protestant has not been a frequent characteristic description of the church in Sweden. When it appears internationally it seems to be a translation of *evangelisk*. Many members would today spontaneously identify themselves as “Swedish Church” (*svenskkyrkliga*) rather than Protestant, but some groups would describe themselves as Protestant, evangelical or charismatic. The Church of Sweden can be considered as belonging among those who wish to be both Protestant and Catholic.

There is still some suspicion about use of the word “catholic”. Perhaps this can be seen in the creed, where the word “catholic” is rendered by *allmännelig*. This has actually been the translation of *catholica* since the late middle ages and was taken up by the reformers because they wanted all parts of the mass to be in Swedish. For average churchgoers today this term probably has the meaning of “general”, without any further connotations, but since “catholic” in Swedish usually denotes Roman Catholic, use of the Swedish word *katolsk* in the creed is usually considered problematic. However, the idea of catholicity has historically been understood to be connected with the idea of “true evangelical teaching”; orthodoxy and catholicity belonged together. A number of prominent theologians in modern times such as Nathan Söderblom and Gustaf Aulén have often made reference to “evangelical catholicity” as characteristic of the Church of Sweden. And in the official response in 1999 of the Swedish Conference of Bishops to Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Ut unum sint* of 1995, the bishops maintained that the Church of Sweden is also, in the apostolic sense, catholic.⁸

⁸ The response in either an English or a Swedish version can be ordered from info@svenskakyrkan.se. The statement is on page 5. The response was handed over

In the 20th century, it became common to describe the Church of Sweden as a “folk church” (*folkkyrka*). In comparison with the general sense of the term it is used here with some specific elements: the participation of the people in the activities and governance of the church, the vocation of the church to reach out to the Swedish people as a whole, and a revitalization of Swedish ecclesial traditions, not least from the medieval and reformation period. The church is called to minister to everyone who seeks its pastoral services. The adjective “democratic” underlines the fact that all eligible members may participate in the election of and sit on governing bodies both at the parish level, in the diocese and at the national level.

With its character as an Evangelical Lutheran faith community and folk church, the Church of Sweden regards itself an expression of the catholic and worldwide church. This was expressed in a programmatic statement of the Central Governing Board in 1990: “The church is and transmits God’s purpose to all peoples and to all members of the people. The word “folk church” is an expression of the universality of the church or, if you will, its catholicity.” Therefore, being a folk church implies being ecumenical. The Committee for Inter-church and Ecumenical Relations described its understanding of the ecumenical commitment of the Church of Sweden as a process aimed at “restoring the visible unity of the church and thereby its ecumenicity and catholicity.”

Though the Church of Sweden is shaped by the process of reformation, due to both tradition and ecumenical commitment it understands itself as catholic.

4.3 Foundational documents

In the first paragraph of the Church Ordinance (chap 1, § 1)⁹ it is stated that:

The faith, confession and teaching of the Church of Sweden

- comes to expression in worship and life,
- is founded on the Holy Word of God, which is given to us in the Holy Scripture
- is summarized in the three creeds of the early church, and in the Augsburg Confession,
- is ratified in the convocation in Uppsala 1593,
- is explained and commented on in the Book of Concord and in other documents which have been approved by the Church of Sweden.

This is a contemporary confessional summary of the self-understanding of the Church of Sweden. It is worth noticing that it starts with the expression of the faith in worship and life, rather than in a text, indicating that faith is to be lived, taught and learnt. This also means that the approved book of worship, the hymnal and its lectionary are important foundational documents. The Bible is in principle and in practice the primary source of the teaching of the church, but has to be interpreted by the church in the preaching and teaching of every age. Traditionally, the Augsburg Confession and the expositions of Luther’s Small Catechism have served as authoritative interpretations of the faith. The Church Ordinance also refers to the ecumenical documents which have been officially received, as witnessing to the understanding of the faith in the Church of Sweden.

to the pope personally by the archbishop of Uppsala on a visit to Rome 6th May 1999.

9 *Kyrkoordningen för Svenska kyrkan*, (3:e upplagan), Stockholm 2010.

Today, the formal process of doctrinal interpretation is the responsibility of the general synod with its two hundred and fifty democratically elected members. The synod decides on questions of doctrine and worship. Such decisions have to be prepared and approved by the Doctrinal Commission, of which all the bishops are *ex officio* members together with eight elected theologians. The bishops also participate in the synod *ex officio*. They can initiate discussions on various matters and take part in discussions, but not in the decisions.

4.4 Episcopacy, synodality and ministry in the Church of Sweden

The baptismal calling is the basis of every ministry. Every Christian man and woman should fulfil this calling in his or her specific circumstances of life. The priesthood of all believers is one way to describe this common calling to serve the community of believers and all the people. For the preaching of the gospel and the administering of the sacraments certain people are called to a special ministry, to which they are ordained. There is a strong emphasis on *rite vocatus*: the ordinand should have a personal vocation and must be recognized by the church through the bishop.

According to the Church Ordinance of 1571, the episcopal office is warranted by being found in the early church. Moreover, “it has been given to the church by the Holy Spirit, it has been approved by all Christendom everywhere and at all times, and therefore it must remain for as long as the world will last”.

Since 1963 lay people of a diocese have the right to take part in the election of their bishop, returning to a practice which already existed in medieval times. As a sign of the unity of the church, bishops are ordained in Uppsala Cathedral by the archbishop, assisted by other bishops. Bishops from other churches are invited, but only those from churches in full communion with the Church of Sweden participate in the laying on of hands. After the ordination the bishop is solemnly received in his or her diocese.

Today the ordained ministry is described as being threefold in the sense that there is only one ministry but three specific dimensions, episcopal, priestly and diaconal. There is a sequential relationship between priesthood and episcopacy, but not between diaconate and priesthood. The diaconate is a permanent ministry with its own integrity. The diaconate was only fully and formally restored as a permanent, specific order of ministry in the new church ordinance of the year 2000, after a long and gradual development from the mother-house deaconess system of German pietistic Lutheranism in the 19th century.

In both the common baptismal calling of all Christians and the special vocation of the ordained ministry, it is today emphasized that there must be equality between women and men. The role of women has been significant throughout church history but often not acknowledged in the past. Many of the activities of the parishes would not have been possible without the involvement of women. Today the presence and determinative influence of women can be seen at all levels, both lay and ordained. Access to the priesthood and the episcopate respectively were not kept separate. When the general synod of Church of Sweden in 1958 took the decision that the priesthood should be open to women, that decision also implied that it was possible to have women bishops. In 1997 the first woman was elected bishop.

The Church of Sweden has a synodical structure at all levels, with a decision-making assembly and an executive board: parish assembly and parish council,

diocesan assembly and diocesan board, general synod and central board. These consist of elected members (lay and ordained) and ex officio ordained members (parish priest at parish level; bishop at diocesan level; bishops in general synod and archbishop and one other bishop on the central board). In each diocese there is also a diocesan chapter, with roots in medieval times. The chapter is an organ of oversight over clergy and parishes in the diocese. Prior to the separation of church and state it was a state institution employing the clergy; now it is a purely ecclesiastical organ of authority. It consists of bishop and cathedral dean, one elected representative of the priests and the deacons, and three elected lay representatives. In addition there must be a qualified judge on the chapter. The role of the chapter is to accept candidates for the ordained ministry, admit to and examine them for ordination, vet and declare eligible any priest or deacon who applies for a position in a parish, exercise oversight on how clergy fulfil their ministry and keep their ordination vows, and on how parishes fulfil their pastoral tasks according to the Church Ordinance. It can censure clergy, and also has to adjudicate on whether there are any doctrinal questions involved in a conflict if a parish wants to dismiss a priest. A parish is the legal employer of the clergy, but may only dismiss a priest or deacon if it is a question of problems which could arise in any work place, i.e. mismanagement, embezzlement, bad leadership, not on questions of faith and order.

The dioceses are divided into deaneries. The dean is the bishop's representative and liaises between the clergy and the bishop, keeps the bishop informed of the situation in the parishes, assists the bishop in oversight through amongst other things visitations, supports the clergy in their pastoral work and ministerial identity and encourages voluntary pastoral cooperation over parish boundaries.

4.5 Ecumenical concerns and achievements

The Church of Sweden has often in modern times described itself as a "bridge-building church". It has taken an active part in the contemporary ecumenical movement since its beginnings in the early 20th century, both multilaterally through various ecumenical organisations, and bilaterally by maintaining relations with particular churches.

Archbishop Nathan Söderblom was an early pioneer of ecumenism. The Stockholm Conference on Life & Work which he convened in 1925 was one of the major steps leading to the creation of the WCC in 1948. He also adopted a pan-Scandinavian and Baltic church policy with the intention of making the Church of Sweden a bridge church gradually reuniting Lutherans, Anglicans and even Catholics by taking advantage of the episcopal succession.

The Church of Sweden has since financially supported and actively taken part in all dimensions of the ecumenical movement organized in the WCC. The Faith & Order Conference in 1952 took place in Lund and the General Assembly of WCC in 1968 in Uppsala. It has also been a member of the CEC since its inception in 1959. The Church of Sweden plays a major role in the Swedish Christian Council with its twenty five members.

4.5.1 Relationships with the Anglican Churches

Relations between the Church of Sweden and Church of England began already in the early 18th century. There was cooperation between the Episcopal Church in America and congregations of the Church of Sweden there, involving mutual recognition and interchange of ministries. After the rejection of the validity of Anglican

orders by Rome in the encyclical *Apostolicae Curae* of 1896, there were discussions at Lambeth Conferences in the late 19th and early 20th century about rapprochement to other churches with the historic episcopate. These included both the Old Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden. Episcopal bishops were amongst those who proposed contacts with the latter.

The Church of England in particular sought contact during this period with the Church of Sweden as it perceived that the question of apostolic succession gave an area of ecclesiological commonality. There has been an agreement of intercommunion between the Church of England and the Church of Sweden since 1922, and mutual participation in bishops' consecrations followed. Even before that contacts were established between Anglo-Catholics in England and high church groups in Sweden.

From the 1980's conversations were carried on in a wider context between the Anglican churches of the British Isles and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches, which eventually led to the Porvoo Agreement on communion in 1992. An episcopal structure was recognised as necessary for this close relationship, and continuous historic succession was seen as an important sign of apostolicity. If, however, other important factors prevailed, a break in succession could be accepted and restored. Since the signing of the agreement many dioceses and parishes have formed links with each other, and clergy from one church have served in another. A number of theological conferences and consultations have been held.

4.5.2 Relationships with the Orthodox Churches

The Church of Sweden has developed contacts with Orthodox and Oriental Churches for many years on a bilateral level but particularly within the multilateral context of WCC and CEC.

At the local level there is practical cooperation between Church of Sweden parishes and different Orthodox and Oriental immigrant congregations, for instance in the use of the same church building. Many individual members of the Church of Sweden have been profoundly influenced by Orthodox spirituality and not least iconography.

At the national level the Church of Sweden has for the last twenty years annually invited all the Orthodox and Oriental communities in Sweden to conversations about topics of common interest, without the intention of producing ecumenical documents. In addition at present official dialogues are being conducted with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church in Sweden. Theologians from the Church of Sweden have been involved in international dialogue between the Orthodox Churches and the LWF. There have been no official relations between the Church of Sweden and the Patriarchate of Moscow. In spite of this, the Russian Orthodox Church in 2006 decided to break off relations when the Church of Sweden decided to recognize and bless same-sex partnerships. At the local level, however, contacts continue.

4.5.3 Relationships with the Roman Catholic Church

Some informal contacts between the Church of Sweden and the Roman Catholic Church, both at home and internationally, existed prior to the Second Vatican Council, but it was in connection with this council that relationships really began to develop. A Swedish bishop was one of the LWF observers at the council. When the

official Lutheran-Catholic dialogue started immediately after the council, Swedish theologians were involved.

In the 1970's dialogues started also at the national level between the Church of Sweden and the Roman Catholic diocese of Stockholm. They have produced a series of documents.¹⁰

The visit to Sweden by Pope John Paul II in 1989 led to a decade of intense and creative relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The pope's visit was followed by joint visits by the archbishop of Uppsala and the archbishop of Turku in Finland to Rome in 1991. Together with the pope they led vespers at the high altar of St Peter's. Since then all the archbishops of the Church of Sweden have officially visited the Vatican and joint vespers in St Peter's were conducted also in 1999. At the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Uppsala Convocation in 1593, the head of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was present and preached in the Cathedral of Uppsala (along with the Patriarch of Constantinople) and the warm relationship was again strongly affirmed. The cordial and promising relationships were later partially disturbed by growing disagreement on ethical matters. The Brigittine sisters in Rome have played a significant role in building and maintaining the good relations. A bishop of the Church of Sweden served for many years as co-moderator of the WCC – Roman Catholic Joint Working Group.

As with the Orthodox and Oriental Churches there has been at the local level a lot of contact and practical cooperation between parishes, and between priests in pastoral situations. This has included the use of church buildings belonging to the Church of Sweden for Roman Catholic masses and other services or activities, if the Catholic parish has not had premises of its own.

The Church of Sweden ratified the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* published by the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in 1999.¹¹ This statement has also formed the basis of one of the most recent expressions of ecumenical relations between the Church of Sweden and Roman Catholic Church in the Nordic context. In the spring of 2010 a dialogue between the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland on the one hand and the Roman Catholic dioceses of Stockholm and Helsinki on the other was concluded with the publication of *Justification in the Life of the Church*.¹² This round of conversations was an indirect outcome of the papal visit to Scandinavia in 1989, when the pope felt that the special character of the reformation and consequent history of the Lutheran Churches in Sweden and Finland gave good reason for further investigation. This started in 2002 and has dealt with various aspects of ecclesiology in the light of the *Joint Declaration*. It proposed that the possibility of

10 *Äktenskap och familj i kristen belysning*, Stockholm 1975. (Marriage and the Family from a Christian Point of View); *Dop och kyrkotillhörighet*, Stockholm 1978 (Baptism and Church Membership); *Biskopsämbetet*, Stockholm 1988 (published in English as *The Office of Bishop*, LWF Studies, Geneva 1993); *Kyrkan som sakrament*, Stockholms katolska stift och Svenska kyrkan, Stockholm 1999 (The Church as Sacrament); *Ekumeniska äktenskap*, Stockholms katolska stift och Svenska kyrkan, Stockholm 1999 (Ecumenical Marriages).

11 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, 2000.

12 *Rättfärdiggörelsen I kyrkans liv*, Stockholm 2010 (English translation, *Justification in the Life of the Church*, Church of Sweden, Roman Catholic Diocese of Stockholm, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Roman Catholic Diocese of Helsinki, Uppsala, Stockholm, Helsinki 2010).

dispensation for members of these two Lutheran churches to receive communion in the Roman Catholic Church be extended. It also asked Rome to consider the possibility of considering the Church of Sweden and the Church of Finland as sister churches, in the full ecclesiological sense in which this term is used by the Roman Catholic Church.

4.5.4 Relationships with other Lutheran and Protestant churches

Many of the inter-church relations of the Church of Sweden are channelled through the LWF, which was founded in Lund in 1947. Even if this is an intra-Lutheran forum, the great diversity of history and context among member churches encourages ecumenical approaches. All member churches of the LWF are in communion with each other, but the Church of Sweden maintains direct bilateral relations with a number of specific churches, especially in the global south.

It has for instance long standing relations with the Evangelical Ethiopian Church Mekane Yesus (which have recently been broken off due to disagreement on homosexuality), and with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania through a long missionary cooperation, in the former case mainly through the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Similarly, it has well-developed relations with Lutheran churches in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Liberia. With them there are special agreements called Letters of Understanding, as with the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica. It has also supported the small but important Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

The Church of Sweden has related to various German Lutheran *Landeskirchen* through history. During the 20th century several dioceses developed special relations with both Lutheran and united churches, especially in the German Democratic Republic to support them in the difficult communist era. Only since 2003 has there been a formal agreement on church fellowship between the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD). With the United Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), there is no special agreement since they are in fellowship through the LWF. The Church of Sweden has chosen not to be a member of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE, formerly The Leuenberg Fellowship), since its model of church fellowship was felt to be based on a minimalistic definition of unity, not dealing with differences in the understanding of ecclesiology and ordained ministry.

In 1994 the Church of Sweden entered an agreement on church fellowship, mutually recognizing ministries, with the Methodist Church in Sweden which is episcopal and a part of the global United Methodist Church. The Methodist Church is very small in Sweden and the agreement has in one or two places led to the Methodist congregation becoming a group within a Church of Sweden parish and the Methodist priest working in that parish. The understanding of apostolicity and ministry developed in BEM and in the Porvoo Agreement is also reflected in an agreement on church fellowship with the Swedish Mission Covenant Church from the year 2006. The Church of Sweden has also conducted a theological dialogue with the Baptist Union of Sweden between 1998 and 2010, producing three documents but not the agreement some people had hoped for. Despite greater convergence on sacramentality and ecclesiology than might have been expected, there were still aspects of the understanding of baptism which could not be reconciled. The Methodist, Mission Covenant and Baptist denominations have now formed a united church. It remains to be seen what kind of relationship with this new church will develop in the future, since the existing agreements with two of them cannot simply be transferred.

4.6 The life of the church

In the Church Ordinance from the year 2000, it is stated that the task of a parish is to celebrate worship, teach the faith, carry out diaconal ministry and conduct mission. These four aspects of the church's life and mission are equally essential and mutually dependant. Each parish is required to have a parish strategy (*församlingsinstruktion*) in which it presents how it intends to work with all these four aspects. This strategy must be approved by the diocesan chapter. The four aspects identified in the Ordinance can be subsumed in celebrating, witnessing and serving.

4.6.1 A celebrating church

The history of worship in Sweden is in continuity with the liturgical life of the Western medieval church. Since the reformation, and especially since the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy, the emphasis in the services of worship has often been on the proclamation of the word. The frequency of eucharistic worship has varied through the centuries, but until the revival of regular communion in the middle of the 20th century, mass was celebrated only a limited number of times each year. This was not necessarily an expression of depreciation, but to receive the sacrament was considered an important act that required proper preparation. Celebrating communion with the sick in their homes has been a regular part of pastoral care. Participation in communion was part of the social control in the uniform society to the end of the 19th century. Today the main Sunday service is usually eucharistic due to a strong eucharistic revival as in many other churches since the early 20th century, as a fruit of the international liturgical renewal and the ecumenical movement.

Following Lutheran tradition only the two dominical sacraments of baptism and eucharist have been recognized (possibly three if confession is included). Regardless of formal definition, the rites of the church such as confirmation, marriage and funerals have functioned as means of grace at significant junctures in the lives of people. Today these occasions may be the primary encounter of many people with the church and with the gospel, and an experience of God's presence.

There has been a carefully ordered form of worship, following the classic liturgical structure: preparation through confession, the liturgy of the word with the reading of Scriptures and preaching, confession of faith and intercessions, and (when the Lord's supper is celebrated) the meal with prayers of varying form but always including the words of institution (with an epicletic element though not necessarily an epiclesis), the Lord's prayer and communion. There has always been a lectionary with set readings for the seasons of the church's year. Liturgical vestments have never been completely abolished, but have been used in more or less liturgically consistent ways at various periods since the reformation. In the 20th century vestments have come back into general and consistent use throughout the church.

The current book of worship was introduced in 1986. It was heavily influenced by the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council and a result of liturgical renewal and experimentation in 1970's and early 1980's. It is characterized by a proliferation of alternatives in comparison with its predecessor. There are three forms (solemn, simple, family) for each of the two basic types of main Sunday service, eucharistic and non-eucharistic. A great variety of other services, influenced for instance by Taizé and Iona, or using meditative types of Swedish origin, for example "The Mass of Inner Quiet" (*Sinnesromässan*), are used. Services or devotions with a predominantly musical content of varying styles attract many. The wor-

ship book of 1986 is presently being revised, proposing a clear classic *ordo* and a more inclusive language. The proposed revision is being used during a trial period of a year from the First Sunday of Advent 2012, and it may be approved by the General Synod in 2015.

A significant feature of worship in the Church of Sweden is hymn singing. It would be most unusual not to sing hymns, regardless of whether it is a Sunday or weekday service, or even just simple devotions. Since the publication of the first officially approved hymnbook in 1695, an official hymnal has been used (at least at the main service) throughout the church. In the past pupils in schools had to learn hymns by heart, and this was a significant part of preparation for confirmation. There is also an old tradition of liturgical singing with a Swedish adaptation of Gregorian chant. Choir singing is a very prominent part of parish life. There are more than 100 000 people who regularly sing in church choirs.

Sweden is considered a secularized country. Although there is a large nominal church membership, the average church attendance is low at ordinary Sunday services. Despite this, large numbers go to church on certain days of the year: First Sunday of Advent, St Lucy's Day (13th December), Christmas Midnight Mass and Christmas Morning service, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, as well as on All Saints Day. The readings and hymns convey basic Christian themes which, even if only subliminally, can affect the people attending these celebrations. This creates a pastoral challenge for the ministers and other representatives of the church to present the gospel in a clear but popular manner in such a context.

4.6.2 A witnessing church

Witnessing can be understood to include both presenting and explaining the faith in preaching and teaching to those who have already heard about Christ, and also proclaiming the Gospel to those who have not yet been reached by the Good News. The task of witnessing can also include making the voice of the church heard in public debate. This will be done in the parishes to the extent that individual priests and other parish representatives are willing or feel equipped to do it, or are known to media as someone to turn to. Otherwise, it is usually bishops, or other representatives of the dioceses or national church, whether elected or staff, who are active in this public role.

All parishes will have a variety of catechetical activities. All of those that are aimed at children and youth are seen as a form of baptismal catechesis post factum. Even if baptism is a unique unrepeatable act, it is also an on-going process. Luther taught that Christians must daily live out their baptism, dying to the old man and rising with Christ in newness of life, which is explicitly stated at baptisms. Each parish is supposed to have a pastoral strategy for following up baptism and taking responsibility for those that have received the sacrament.

Some parishes will run Sunday schools, usually by offering children special instruction during the sermon on the theme of the texts for the day. Most parishes have different children's groups meeting during the week, from parent and toddler groups up to pre-school groups. In these there will be some form of "teaching" in addition to play and socializing, and in the groups where parents participate there will be aspects aimed at them as well.

The most explicit and even liturgically marked form for following up baptism is confirmation. The Church of Sweden still confirms a large number of youths at the age of fifteen – varying in different parts of the country between 30% - 60% of the age group. All parishes have a pastoral strategy for this and structured confirmation

classes usually meet for about fifty hours over a period of one year. The actual method of catechesis can vary a lot, often combining special interests in confirmation groups, i.e. music or sport. The groups must spend some time at a confirmation camp, sometimes in the form of travel abroad. Some parishes and many diocesan institutions offer summer camps during which the preparation for confirmation is carried out intensively for a month.

For post confirmation contact with young people many parishes have youth clubs. There is a national organisation for young people (up to the age of 30) called Church of Sweden Youth. For all catechetical programmes related to children and young people, most parishes employ specially qualified youth workers. They are trained at special colleges run by the church, or have an equivalent teaching qualification. The priests are also involved in the teaching, especially of confirmation classes, and often there are catechetical teams consisting of several categories of staff in a parish.

The need for adult catechesis is felt in many parishes. Various methods for an adult path to faith are used, for example The Adult Catechumenate, Alpha, Emmaus. There is no generally approved method; it is up to a parish to find the one that suits them and the people they encounter.

4.6.3 A serving church

The Church of Sweden does not run many large diaconal institutions for social and medical services. This became difficult when the welfare state was built up. There was little space left for non-governmental actors and they were seen as interfering with what was considered the sole responsibility of society. This is now changing and there is greater scope for other agencies to work in these fields. The Church of Sweden makes its particular contribution to social welfare through parish diaconal work.

Each parish has the responsibility to serve those within its boundaries who are in need. The responsibility for leading and coordinating the diaconal work of a parish belongs to the permanent deacons. Most parishes have employed deacons. The deacon's role is not to do everything that needs to be done, but to inspire and train others to serve their neighbour and to apply professional social and caring competence in the work of the parish. Diaconal volunteer groups often help with pastoral visiting and other activities for people needing support. Much of such work relates to the elderly and disabled, addicts, immigrants and refugees.

The deacon will represent the parish in its relations with social institutions, and strives also to give voice to the voiceless in both church and society. This is not an easy task, and it happens that representatives of the church are accused both within and outside the church of being too political.

There has traditionally been a strong interest in "foreign missions" in many parishes. The Church of Sweden International Department, which previously was two organisations, Church of Sweden Mission and Church of Sweden Aid, is responsible for developing strategies and coordinating concrete work for international diaconal work and mission in the form of projects either with bilateral partners or through the work of WCC, Action of Churches Together (ACT Alliance) and LWF. This international work has diocesan, deanery and parish ombudsmen who work voluntarily to awaken interest and increase involvement in and support for international issues, for instance by collecting money. Many parishes will have voluntary international groups for this. In the past missionaries were sent out to other countries. The work of these missionaries was often followed with great inter-

est in many parishes. Today the number of missionaries abroad has been significantly reduced, and the emphasis is on supporting partner churches in their missionary task in their own context, through capacity-building and concrete projects, and when necessary by providing personnel on a limited time contract rather than long-term basis.

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5 The church as a gift of God's presence in the world: our common vision

This part of the document is about ecclesiology from the overarching perspective of the church as a mystery and an effective sign, in other words as a sacrament for the world.¹³ It starts with a reference to the marks of the church and the reminder that the church is both a gift given by God and a task to accomplish (5.1). The focus is twofold: the first part (5.2) highlights the similarities of the two churches as can be seen from the respective ecclesial structures and the importance given to the celebration of the eucharist. The second part (5.3) describes differences between the two churches in as much as one of them is a national majority church, and the other an international minority church. This offers to both of them perspectives which could be developed. Lastly, the question of sacraments is taken up (5.4), since there is a difference in defining them.

The church as a reality in which we 'believe' is the realm of life and salvation, created by the Father in his sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, where human beings who are justified by and reconciled to God, and brought together as his people, are called to share in God's saving and life-giving acts and to lead the entire creation to its eternal consummation.

The church is primarily a mystery of God. As such it has a fundamental sacramental character. It is an instrument of God's love and mercy for the world. This love and mercy culminates in Christ, who may justly be termed the original sacrament.

In its human aspects the church is also a socially constructed institution with its own form and history. The church as God's creation is not entirely coterminous with its human manifestation, nor is its human manifestation free from sin. Therefore the church is in continuous need of God's mercy and forgiveness.

At the very heart of the church, there is ambivalence. On the one hand the true church is hidden and an object of faith. On the other hand it is visible and an object of practical reflection or research. This ambiguity affects in two ways the way in which we perceive the marks of the church. The first is that from a phenomenological point of view the church is seen as broken into confessions, denominations and separate communities. The second is that we can never be certain about who truly belongs to the church. Even if all churches were visibly one, we would not be sure of who were members of the Body of Christ until he came to judge the living and the dead (cf. Mt 13).

5.1 The marks of the church according to the creed

Both our churches refer to the creed of Nicaea-Constantinople as the basis for a theological elaboration of the faith and the church. The section on the Holy Spirit is elaborated with the words: "we believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church". The reality that in the creed is called the church is grounded and has its origin in the triune God. The four adjectives one, holy, catholic and apostolic – often called *notae ecclesiae* or the marks of the church, are the four interdependent characteristics or attributes of the church. They are correlated divine gifts and as

13 *The Church – Towards a Common Vision*, §§ 25-27 (as in footnote 3). Cf. *Church and World. The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Faith and Order Paper 151, Geneva 1990, esp. pp. 25-34.

such also to be translated into the concrete life of the members of the church in *leitourgia*, *martyria* and *diakonia* (see below).

5.1.1 The church is one and holy

The church is one and holy because the one and holy triune God is the ground of the church and the goal of its pilgrimage towards its final consummation in the Kingdom of God.

The *oneness* and *unity* become manifest in the eucharistic liturgy as celebrated in the parishes and other communities of the local church (on this term see below). Here the one Christ, made present by the power of the Holy Spirit, is proclaimed in the gospel and is given in the eucharistic gifts of bread and wine (to be received as his body and blood) to each of the communicants who thereby become what they already are: a social body called the Body of Christ. The church as Body of Christ is a community (*koinonia*) of people united by what they receive: Christ through the gospel and the sacraments. Since they participate in a God-given reality, they are also sanctified and renewed in their relationship with the holy God, and thus called and empowered to show love for and unity with one another.

Each member of the church is called to a life of *holiness* by his or her being baptized in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is fundamentally linked with faith and the first stage of a sacramental initiation – including what later has become the distinct rite of confirmation – organically leading up to the eucharistic sharing, signifying a full incorporation into the Body of Christ. This process is a life-long process of growing in faith, sanctification, and fellowship with others. Through holy people, the hidden holiness of the church may become a visible reality.

Christ sacramentally given in the holy supper is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, confessed as the risen Christ and Son of God, and the messenger of the Good News of the coming kingdom of God. In the eucharistic liturgy, his words are made present through the power of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the gospel of God's saving love to all creation to be received with an open heart and discerning mind. To hear the gospel implies and should lead to a life of sanctification, and for the members of the church to become attentive witnesses of God's mercy, sharing in the proclamation of the gospel, praying for the salvation of the world, repenting one's loss of orientation and faith, and looking for the ultimate reality of the kingdom.

The holiness and the unity of the church are connected with each other, but experienced in different ways by different people. The one and holy church is a gift of God, but it is the duty of all the baptized to share in the responsibility of preserving the unity of the church and increasing its holiness in service and mission.

5.1.2 The church is catholic and apostolic

The Greek term *katholikos* denotes something that many have in common amongst a plurality of given realities. This meaning of the term becomes intelligible if we regard the *one* church confessed in the creed as being expressed in a *plurality* of local churches in communion with each other. The local church gathered around its bishop (i.e. the diocese) represents and realizes in one particular place the one church which we confess in the creed. The faith, life and mission which it has in common with others – that which is catholic – make the local church into what it essentially is: the presence of the triune God as revealed in the Father's sending of

the Son and the Holy Spirit which has found its sacramental form in a local human community.

The local church carries the mark of catholicity inasmuch as it is centred in God. It does not possess this catholicity of itself but only in communion with other local churches. These represent the one church in their respective places. Thus the presence of the triune God gives all the local churches a fundamental common identity. This theological identity – not to be confused with other identities of a historical and socio-cultural kind – points to the real source of unity in each local church and between all the local churches. The communion with other churches and with the worldwide communion of Christians is a consequence of the catholicity of each local church.

The catholicity of the church is not the same as geographical universality, nor can the term “catholic” simply be translated “universal”. Rather, the universality of the church is the corollary of each local church being catholic, i.e. sharing an identical reality that fully mediates God’s salvation to humanity through the church’s faith, sacramental life and ministry.¹⁴

The *apostolicity* of the church should also be seen in the context of the local church being in communion with other local churches. Apostolicity denotes the continuity of the church in time and space with the mission that Christ and his apostles carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit. This continuity is related to the entire witness of the church in word and sacrament. Some constitutive elements can be singled out, but should not be seen in isolation. The passing on of the ordained ministry by prayer and the laying-on of hands is such an element, called “apostolic succession”.¹⁵ This is especially manifested in the consecration of a bishop: he or she is elected by the local church, ordained by bishops of other local churches in communion with it. It takes place in a eucharistic context where all baptized present share in the commitment of the church to the passing on of the faith once and for all revealed and yet entrusted to the obedient responsibility of the church. Two dimensions can be discerned in the event: the “horizontal” historical continuity within the communion of local churches and the “vertical” immediacy of the congregation to God made clear in the epicletic ordination prayer. It thus symbolizes the co-responsibility of the local church and the communion of local churches for its remaining true to the gospel and in continuity with the ancient church. The apostolic succession is in the first and last analysis the process of the church continuing the apostolic tradition in various forms of mission-oriented adaptation.

5.2 Local, regional and worldwide dimensions of the one church

Thus far the term local church has occurred several times, and it is appropriate to expand on it with a view to explaining how the unity of the visible church and its mission in a worldwide context is to be understood. In both our churches there is a continuous discussion about how best to find sustainable structures for the future and how best to express the relations between bishop, priest and parish. This is not

14 The term local church in this paragraph does not apply to denominations living in separation from each other albeit with the highest degree of ecumenical commitment. It applies to communities that are in visible ecclesial communion with each other.

15 See § 5.4.

just a question of organization but of theology. In what follows, we describe a view of the local church which is close to ancient and general tradition and applicable to both churches. Furthermore we also give special attention to the wider communion of local churches, which transcends national boundaries. This is a challenge for both of our churches.

5.2.1 The local church

Both our churches are episcopally and synodically ordered churches. In a certain place – which in most cases is a region of varying size – there is one bishop who is the personal focus of unity for baptized men and women, ordained and lay, living in this particular place. It is this ecclesial community that is called “local church” and is considered to be the basic ecclesial unity in our reflection on the various geographic dimensions of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its visible aspect.

How the bishop is the personal focus becomes apparent in various ways. He or she presides at the eucharistic assembly and is the preacher of the gospel, because the episcopal office is rooted in the central act of the church (word and sacrament), not somewhere else.

This becomes visible in the interrelationship of bishop and all the other members of the local church. It can usefully be described by means of the widely shared concept of the threefold ‘episcopé’ (introduced by BEM in 1982, as already mentioned in § 3.4), i.e. the shared responsibility for maintaining the church in obedience to its God-given mission and unity. The “personal episcopé” belongs to the bishop, the “collegial episcopé” belongs to the presbyters (priests) who preside at the eucharistic assemblies of parishes and other communities and proclaim the gospel, the “communal episcopé” belongs to other baptized members of the church who join the other bearers of the episcopé for deliberation and decision-making in synodical assemblies (like the diocesan synod or parish councils or other bodies). Whatever legal form this interaction of shared responsibilities may take, in which the lay members play an important part in the general direction of the church, they all together form the local church (in our traditions usually called a diocese). By its composition and size it should be able to fulfil all the manifold tasks of the church in *leitourgia*, *martyria* and *diakonia*. It is in these basic actions that the church lives its mission in the world.

These three concepts are used in the contemporary ecumenical context to refer to the fundamental aspects and expressions of the church. *Leitourgia* includes all the various forms of worshipping God in praise, thanksgiving and intercession for his creation. *Martyria* includes the various acts of the proclamation of the gospel, catechesis, the accounting for the Christian hope and faith in all its dimensions, statements on social and political issues as far as they are necessary consequences of the gospel. In *diakonia* the church fulfils its mission of healing and caring for men and women and the whole of creation on the way to the fulfilment of God’s plan. These aspects of the church’s mission cannot be neatly differentiated, since they often overlap and have their inner, spiritual centre in the eucharistic service. But to live up to and fulfil these tasks in a coherent and professional way a parish is ordinarily too small, which is another reason for taking the diocese as the basic unit for further reflection on the wider unity of the church.

All these aspects of mission and interrelationship of the baptized have to be borne in mind to appreciate the above statement that the local church is a representation and realization of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church as confessed in the creed and that each local church shares the same theological identity. This, how-

ever, becomes only manifest if the local churches are in visible communion (*koinonia*) and unity.

5.2.2 The regional and worldwide communion of local churches

Regional *koinonia* is always a communion of local churches gradually extending into a worldwide communion. The first stage may be a communion of local churches of a particular country (for instance the Church of Sweden as a national church and the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands as a church province) or of a part of it. The geographical limits or further extensions (regional or otherwise, for instance the Union of Utrecht) will be dependent on contingent factors of history, culture, tradition. Finally there is the worldwide communion of communions of local churches.

Each communion of local churches, however wide, is also a representation and realization of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church being an object of faith and confessed in the creed. Again, the common element is their soteriological-trinitarian identity by way of their participation in God's trinitarian life. Each type of communion has to manifest the unity of the church and its mission in various ways.

In order to maintain the regional communion of churches there must be appropriate forms of common consultation and decision-making and giving witness to the common faith in the gospel. In this the bishops have a special responsibility, as they are at the interface of local church and supra-local church, which is regional and worldwide communion. As individual bishops being integrated in a synodal network they have a personal responsibility for the unity of each particular local church; as a group of bishops again integrated in a synodal network they are the collegial focus of unity of a particular communion of local churches. The synod of bishops has a common responsibility to manifest the unity and communion of local churches. Their collegiality thus represents the communion of their local churches rather than the communion of an exclusive episcopal body somehow set apart from "their" local churches.

The responsibility of the bishops is also shared by other members of local churches (lay or ordained) as is the case in the general synod and the diocesan synods of the Church of Sweden. There is no exact analogy in the Union of Utrecht: the IBC as the highest organ of the union consists of bishops only, but their decisions and declarations require the preceding general agreement of the local churches (dioceses).

What has been said for regional communions of local churches could with appropriate adaptation be said about the worldwide communion of communions of churches. Again it is up to the primates of these communions of local churches to act together synodically when giving witness to the common faith in the gospel and when consulting on matters put before them. One of the primates has the primary responsibility for the overall synodical process.¹⁶

5.3 The sacramentality of the church and the means of grace

For half a century there has been a growing consensus among the churches, that the church in its universal and local expressions should be seen as a sign and instrument

¹⁶ The question of primacy in the worldwide of communion of local churches has been given ecumenical consideration in other dialogues in which our churches have been involved. See for instance *Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft*, (as footnote 6) §§ 27–33, 41–47, and *Justification in the Life of the Church*, (as footnote 10) § 5.4.4.

for the kingdom of God and a sacrament for the world. The church is sent into the world, not primarily as an institution, but as the fundamental expression of God's love in Christ. The church is a sacrament of healing, reconciliation and renewal of all creation. She is a mystery and a prophetic sign, a communion sustained by the Holy Spirit, participating in God's mission for the salvation of the world.

A sacrament is a material element transformed by the word of God into a means of salvation. In baptism, water is this material element, in the eucharist bread and wine. The institutional organization of the church is not in itself sufficient to make it the church, which is the body of Christ. It becomes a sacrament for the world only by sharing in communion (*koinonia*) with the Father through the Holy Spirit. The church as *koinonia* is the fundamental sacrament for the life of the world, transcending the limits of the secular and bringing the world to peace with God.

Institutionally churches take different forms in history and culture. As a sacrament for the world, the church is, however, united in communion, mission and hope. The sacramental life of the churches likewise varies, but as a stream of grace from the heart of the triune God, it feeds and unites all believers in a common mission of love. The Old Catholic Churches and the Church of Sweden share this understanding of the sacramentality of the church, but differ somewhat in their sacramental theology and praxis.

5.3.1 Sacramental life in the Old Catholic Churches

The Old Catholic Churches celebrate what in Latin tradition since the 12th century has been defined as seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance/reconciliation, anointing of the sick, ordination to holy orders, and marriage. For each of them, the prayer books offer liturgical rituals, either for public celebration as for the eucharist, or rather for a private act as for anointing of the sick. It has in recent years become more unusual that individuals come for confession and absolution; the sacrament of penitence is today mostly performed in the context of public worship.

Among Old Catholics there is an awareness of certain inherited doctrinal problems in western sacramental theology, but there has never been a tendency to discontinue the celebration of all the seven sacraments as symbolic acts through which the reality of God's grace is communicated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The number of sacraments was not fixed until the 12th century, nor did the early church more exactly define what constitutes a sacrament. The Old Catholic Churches are not bound by any rigid, scholastic systematization of all aspects of sacramental theology. Baptism and eucharist are regarded as the two main sacraments for every believer, and episcopal ordination is seen as essential for the structure of the church. Beside the seven acts recognized as sacraments, there are other symbolic acts named *sacramentalia*.

Listing the eucharist as one sacrament among others, does not, however, fully correspond with the eucharistic ecclesiology of the local church which has become the hallmark of contemporary Old Catholicism. The eucharist is the central manifestation of the pilgrim church on its way to the kingdom and the ordinary context for other sacramental acts. In all Old Catholic parishes the sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle for the communion of the sick.

5.3.2 Sacramental life in the Church of Sweden

Since the reformation, the Church of Sweden regards baptism and eucharist as the two sacraments to be celebrated in every parish, since they are instituted by Jesus Christ whereas there are other acts which may be considered means of grace although they are not called sacraments. In the past fifty years, there has been a remarkable strengthening and liturgical renewal of eucharistic sacramentality, putting the eucharist at the centre of the life of most parishes. This renewal has been stimulated by international ecumenical relations and supported by liturgical reform as an appropriate response to a new search for spirituality. Baptism has also been given new theological attention and found richer pastoral and liturgical forms. Adult baptism has become more common than in the past. At the same time, private confession and absolution has lost ground.

With regard to confirmation, marriage, ordination and anointing different tendencies can be noticed. These acts have not been regarded as sacraments in the full sense of the word, but they have an obvious sacramental dimension. Confirmation is administered by a priest and not by the bishop. It includes the laying-on of hands and prayer for the Holy Spirit, but rarely the use of oil. Although marriage is distinguished from sacraments like baptism and the eucharist, it is regarded as a means of grace. The liturgy of marriage includes vows, a blessing of the rings and of the couple. Ordination of deacons, priests and bishops also has a sacramental character, which has rather been strengthened in recent years. Deacon, priest and bishop share in the same three-fold ministry, and the rites of ordination follow the same pattern. The anointing of the sick, finally, is returning after many years of almost complete absence in the pastoral ministry of the Church of Sweden, but it is still not commonly used and certainly not regarded as a sacrament by most people.

5.3.3 Conclusion

The above sections suggest that there is no church divisive difference between our churches in the theological understanding of sacramental acts and means of grace. The churches show dissimilarities, but at the fundamental theological level and in pastoral practice they are compatible.

5.4 The apostolic succession and the understanding of the episcopal ministry

The fundamental idea is that apostolic tradition is an expression of the apostolicity of the church. It has two main aspects: that the church is sent into the world and that it is built on the faith of the apostles. The very existence and thus the unity of the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). In the early church the succession in teaching (*successio doctrinae*), the succession in episcopal ministry and the succession of the whole church were held together. Later they were separated and even the succession in episcopal ministry was divided into the succession of episcopal sees (*successio sedis*) and succession by the laying-on of hands (*successio manuum*). After several dialogues there is today a convergence which maintains that apostolic succession derives from the apostolicity of the church in all its dimensions.

The basis of the doctrine of the episcopal ministry in apostolic succession is the understanding of the church as a communion grounded in the triune God. The office of a bishop is embedded in the *koinonia* of the whole people of God, related to

baptism, eucharist and ordained ministry of deacons and priests and to lay ministries of various kinds. The ministry of bishops is a sign and instrument for keeping the church faithful to the Holy Scriptures and tradition, to the unity of the church through all ages ministering to the people of God the mystery of the church.

So apostolic succession is a fundamental mark of the catholic church, assigned the task of maintaining the tradition handed over by the apostles. In this apostolic community of all Christians, the bishops are signs and instruments. They are by means of ordination entrusted with their ministry. Ordination is the liturgy by which a bishop elect by means of the laying-on of hands and prayer receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit and he himself or she herself becomes a life-long gift to the church. Through ordination by bishops in continuity with other bishops through the centuries, the apostolic tradition becomes manifest and effective.

What a church teaches about the apostolic succession of bishops is thus what it teaches about the whole people of God.

Laying-on of hands in conjunction with prayer is practised in diverse contexts within the church. Its meaning only becomes clear through the specific context and the accompanying words. It is always understood that the persons who are laying on hands are themselves transmitters of something received. What is transmitted and passed on in the act of laying-on of hands is a gift of God, something divine. Therefore the prayer to God as the giver is part of the laying-on of hands. The laying-on of hands at ordination (practised with reference to Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; cf. also Acts 14:23; 1Tim 5:22) is understood as a sacramental act of expression of the Holy Spirit, in which it is prayed that the Holy Spirit may come upon a person.

The ordination of a bishop through prayer and the laying-on of hands is an act of church communion. The bishop to be ordained is chosen to lead a local church. This is, however, an expression of the presence of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in communion with other local churches, made visible through this symbol of faith. This is expressed through the fact that bishops of other local churches conduct the ordination, and what is more, this is in the context of the eucharist, in which the communion of churches is constituted and represented in the most significant way (cf. Canon 4 of the 1st ecumenical council of Nicea; *Traditio apostolica* 2; Cyprian, Ep 55,8; 67,5). The participation of bishops at the consecration of a bishop is the consequence and the proof of the full communion which exists between the local churches, which is represented by the bishops at the consecration. (cf. also the Statutes of the IBC of 2000, Preamble)

5.4.1 The historic episcopate in the Old Catholic Church

The Old Catholic Church deems the ecclesial ministry as it developed after the apostolic generation and grew into what is called the threefold ministry of bishop, priests and deacons as a gift to the church. Therefore, it is considered to be constitutive for its mission and unity, irrespective of great fluctuations over the centuries in its concrete manifestations and the societal position especially of the bishops. The maintenance of this ministry in history is primarily realized in the ordination of a bishop, duly elected by the local church and ordained by bishops of other local churches. These thereby witness to and actualize the ecclesial communion that exists among them.

As intimated above, the passing on of the ordained ministry by prayer and the laying-on of hands is an element of what is called “apostolic succession”, but this must be seen in connection with the preservation of the apostolic faith and as inte-

grated into the ecclesial context of the co-responsibility of the local church for its remaining true to the mission of the church since the apostles.

For the Old Catholic Churches the existence of apostolic succession thus understood, and the episcopal ministry as set out above, as well as the commitment to both, has always been a requirement in recognizing the essential identity with another church and entering into formal visible communion.

5.4.2 The historic episcopate in the Church of Sweden

Well aware of the fact that apostolic succession has been given different meanings in the western church during the centuries and that the medieval understanding was basic for the standpoint of the Church of Sweden during the reformation period, the Church Ordinance of 1571 remained in place up to the year 2000 and stated that the office of bishop must remain, “so long as this world stands”. This has been the tradition of the Church of Sweden.

During the 20th century the late medieval juridical understanding of apostolic succession gave way to a more ecclesiological understanding. One of the dominating figures in this was the Swedish archbishop Nathan Söderblom. After him the tradition of the Church of Sweden has been on the one hand to reaffirm the meaning of apostolic succession as a sign and instrument of the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the church, binding on the Church of Sweden and offered to other churches which do not have it. On the other hand, the Church of Sweden has not questioned the claim of churches without the historic succession of bishops to be churches of Christ. Therefore, the Church of Sweden has also entered church fellowship with such churches. This is expressed in the Porvoo Common Statement in the following way: “The mutual acknowledgement of our churches and ministries is theologically prior to the use of the sign of the laying on of hands in the historic succession. Resumption of the use of the sign does not imply an adverse judgment on the ministries of those churches which did not previously make use of the sign. It is rather a means of making more visible the unity and continuity of the church at all times and in all places.”¹⁷

5.4.3 Conclusion

Neither of the churches in this dialogue has an experience of being church without episcopacy in apostolic succession. Both churches have struggled with adapting the late medieval tradition to new insights into the understanding in the early church and the forms for being church in the contemporary world. In spite of some differences in how to express episcopacy in apostolic succession in the present ecumenical context, there is fundamental agreement about the meaning and content of it.

¹⁷ *The Porvoo Common Statement*, §53, Council for Christian Unity, Church of England, London 1993.

6 Themes for ongoing consideration following from the common vision

If the two churches decide on the basis of this document to acknowledge their communion, there are a number of themes for ongoing joint consideration in view of their wider ecumenical implications. There are usually three areas which are discussed in ecumenical debate:

- the fundamental faith of the church as given in scripture/apostolic tradition and witnessed in the liturgy, the creeds, the dogmatic decisions of ecumenical councils and other common statements and expressed in the practical life of the baptized;
- the liturgy of the church, especially the eucharist structured around its poles of word and sacrament;
- the ordained ministry of the church in its inner organization, both related to the local church and to the communion of local churches.

All these elements must have enough in common to show the theological identity of separated churches with all their differences that contribute to the plurality that may enrich unity and communion.

6.1 The apostolic tradition and the teaching of the ecumenical councils

In ecumenical dialogues generally the norms for discernment of truth, of divine revelation, are turned into hermeneutical tools, i.e. certain passages in the Holy Scriptures or quotations from a normative document (tradition) become decisive arguments. Today, both our traditions look for possibilities of discovering divine revelation in scripture and tradition in a more dynamic way, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

6.1.1 The authority of the ecumenical councils

The Old Catholic bishops, when explaining what they and their churches abide by in their autonomous ecclesial existence, referred to “the faith of the ancient church as it is formulated in the ecumenical symbols and in the universally accepted dogmatic decisions of the ecumenical synods held in the undivided church of the first millennium” (Declaration of Utrecht, 1889). In their dialogue with the Orthodox Church it was always specified that the Old Catholics accept seven ecumenical councils (within the period of 325 until 787 A.D.).

Instead of speaking of scripture and tradition (thus including the above mentioned dogmatic decisions) as two separated entities or sources of revelation, Old Catholic theology tends to see them as two expressions of the one apostolic tradition, which is interpreted in and by the church. It is confident of being enlightened by the Holy Spirit when using hermeneutically reflected methods.

According to the Church Ordinance of the Church of Sweden of 2000 (as mentioned in § 4.3 above) “the faith, confession, and teaching” of the church is expressed in “worship and life”. It is “founded” in the Holy Scriptures and “summarized” in the Apostle’s, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan and the Athanasian creeds, but also in the unaltered Augsburg Confession. There is a reference in the concluding text of the first part of that confession (repeated twice) to the early fathers, and it

is stated that “our teaching does not include anything opposed to the Holy Scriptures or the Catholic Church or the Roman Church, to the extent that it is known through the early fathers.”¹⁸

The early fathers were frequently quoted in sermons and dogmatic writings in the Church of Sweden up to the 19th century and there is today renewed interest in their writings.

6.1.2 The question of the *Filioque*

Both our churches confess the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381. In ecumenical documents the *filioque* (“and from Son”), a later western interpolation into the original conciliar text according to which the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father”, not “from the Father *and the Son*”, has been discussed. The addition to the original text has caused severe problems in the relations between the churches in the west and the Orthodox Churches.

The Old Catholic Churches have removed the *filioque* in all the Old Catholic liturgical books. Additionally the Old Catholic bishops officially declared in 1970 that they reject any interpretation of the *filioque* implying that the Son is source and origin of the Holy Spirit together with the Father. The high relevance of this particular issue for Old Catholic ecumenical enterprises aiming at the restoration of ecclesial communion requires a response from an ecumenical partner and if needed a common clarification.

The Church of Sweden has not attached the same importance to the *filioque* question as the Old Catholic Churches have, probably because of not having had the same intense dialogue with Orthodox Churches. In the Church Ordinance of the Church of Sweden it is, however, allowed that in a liturgy at which Orthodox faithful are present, the Church of Sweden priest responsible can decide on the omission of the *filioque* (KO, chap.18, §7).

6.2 The connection between Eucharistic sharing and ecclesial communion

In recent ecumenical thought the idea that there is a profound relationship between eucharistic sharing and ecclesial communion has found growing acceptance in many churches in west and east, not least as being in accordance with important patristic voices. Eucharistic sharing and communion – which cannot be seen in isolation from hearing the word of God and carrying on the communion received with Christ into manifold acts of *martyria* and *diakonia* beyond the mass – is an expression of ecclesial communion and, at the same time, a means of deepening it.

For centuries members of one church did not receive communion in another (denominationally separated) church. In recent times the ecumenical movement has brought about a change in many churches. Eucharistic sharing among members of visibly still separated or not fully reconciled churches has become either an officially agreed or tacitly accepted practice (often termed eucharistic hospitality). This, however, stands in contradiction to the above mentioned recent re-evaluation of the eucharistic service and assembly as the primary manifestation of ecclesial

18 ”Haec fere summa est doctrinae apud nos, in qua cerni potest nihil inesse, quod discrepet a scripturis vel ab ecclesia catholica vel ab ecclesia romana, quatenus ex scriptoribus [German:”soviel aus der Väter schriften”] nobis nota est.”

communion in Christ. The eucharist, which is no longer seen as simply one of a number of other sacraments, is recognized as the gift by which through the action of the Holy Spirit the celebrating community is affirmed and constituted as the Body of Christ. The baptized who hear the Word of God and receive the Body and Blood of the Lord are united with God and with their fellow celebrants. They are the one church and are called visibly to live and manifest this communion in Christ in all their actions.

This is the official Old Catholic position judging from agreed dialogue texts with the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. However, it refers to the issue of how *churches* relate to each other: eucharistic sharing presupposes and implies ecclesial communion, not a form of what is now called intercommunion. And in order to take up ecclesial communion, it is not enough to have a joint understanding of baptism, the eucharist or the ordained ministry as isolated entities. Rather a common fundamental understanding of the church as a communion grounded in the triune God must be presupposed, for only then will baptism, the eucharist and the ordained ministry or, respectively, the elements of scripture and tradition, the ancient creeds, the sacraments and the office of bishop in apostolic succession find their place in the mystery of the church.¹⁹ Thus visible eucharistic sharing without being able to manifest its spiritual corollary and meaning, i.e. visible ecclesial union, is self-contradictory.

There is, however, an exception to this: in Germany an official bilateral agreement on eucharistic sharing with the EKD was reached without ecclesial communion linked to a shared understanding of the church and the episcopal ministry.²⁰

The practice of *individual* baptized communicants of other churches hardly ever being refused is considered to lie on a different level.

In the past the Church of Sweden had a long history of not only forbidding intercommunion but even participation in worship in another ecclesial tradition. This has gradually changed during the 20th century and from the 1970's eucharistic hospitality for individual baptized Christians of any tradition has become increasingly accepted. It has mainly to do with on the one hand a convergence in eucharistic theology and in the view of ordained ministry in general, but also the realization of the fact that the lines of division were not necessarily drawn between traditions but right through them.

Eucharistic hospitality is usually seen as a consequence of the mutual recognition of baptism. As there is a certain tension between this and our common vision in which eucharistic sharing is an expression of ecclesial communion, this theme needs further consideration.

6.3 Transitivity in established communion

When communion is established between churches the basis for it should be coherent with other agreements the churches involved have made. This is evident in multi-lateral dialogue processes but a challenge in bilateral dialogues. The reason for this is generally seen in the fact that the dialogue themes chosen depend on the historically grounded controversies and possibilities of establishing unity between the particular churches. It is also important to draw attention to the character of ecumenical dialogues: they are not negotiations stamped by compromises but

¹⁹ See above § 2.

²⁰ See footnote 7.

attempts to work together to understand divine revelation, taking into account the traditions which the participants represent.

If a bilateral dialogue presents a document containing a proposal for possible communion between churches, it is handed over to the churches to be received, revised or rejected. If it is received and the result is a communion incorporating the two churches, the question of transitivity arises, i.e. the consequences for the churches involved in relation to other communions of churches in which one of the churches might be involved.

This dialogue between the Old Catholic Church and the Church of Sweden accepts that it is not possible to extend one ecclesial communion with a particular church to all the other churches with which this particular church is in communion. Thus – to take an obvious example – the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht is in ecclesial communion with the Anglican Communion, but it is not in communion with those Nordic and Baltic churches which are in communion with the Anglican churches of the British Isles (the Porvoo Communion, of which the Church of Sweden is a member church).²¹

In terms of ecclesiology it is difficult to say whether this is indicative of a superficial process of establishing communion or if the mechanisms in the dialogue process and the decision-making grounded on that, or both, give rise to the problem that one church might be in communion with another that the sister church is not in communion with. In our dialogue we have tried to solve one of these problems in relation to the Anglicans and the Independent Philippine Church. But the problem of intransitivity also arises: whether the churches who are in communion have moved in their ecumenical outreach in different directions or whether ongoing dialogues with churches that are outside this untidy constellation actually prevent the one church from joining the other church (in communion) in its “communion building”.

As churches enter into ecumenical agreements with various other churches, transitivity and the consistency between these agreements become more complicated and need continued consideration.

21 Declaration of the IBC on participation in the consecration of Anglican bishops, November 2003 (http://www.utrechter-union.org/page/146/declaration_of_the_ibc_on_the_pa).

7 Recommendations

In as much as we acknowledge

- (i) that each other's churches realize the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Jesus Christ,
- (ii) that variant traditions in our churches, be they structural, liturgical, theological or disciplinary, do not prevent them from being part of the continuation of the apostolic tradition through the centuries but manifest a basic unity in diversity which can be deepened in future communion,
- (iii) that each other's churches have a rich liturgical and eucharistic life, an unbroken episcopal structure, a deep commitment to the visible unity of the church and therefore to the ecumenical movement, and an open and critical attitude to changing values in society,
- (iv) that there is a solid foundation on a spiritual as well as institutional level which enables future relationships between our churches and that our common faith and mission provide opportunities to support each other, either in Europe or through our common contacts on other continents.

We recommend the Church of Sweden and the Churches of the Union of Utrecht to commit themselves:

- (v) to regard baptized members of all these churches as members of their own, in accordance with regulations in force;
- (vi) to welcome one another's members to receive sacramental and other pastoral ministrations;
- (vii) to share a common life in mission and service, to pray for and with one another, and to share resources;
- (viii) to welcome persons ordained in the Church of Sweden or in one of the Churches in the Union of Utrecht, to serve in any of our churches, by invitation and in accordance with any regulations which may be in force, in the receiving church without re-ordination;
- (ix) to invite one another's bishops to participate in the laying-on of hands at the ordination of bishops;
- (x) to encourage consultations of representatives of our churches, and to facilitate learning and exchange of ideas and information in theological and pastoral matters; as well as exchange of students;
- (xi) to invite observers from each other's churches to major events;
- (xii) to encourage cooperation between Old Catholic and Church of Sweden parishes wherever possible

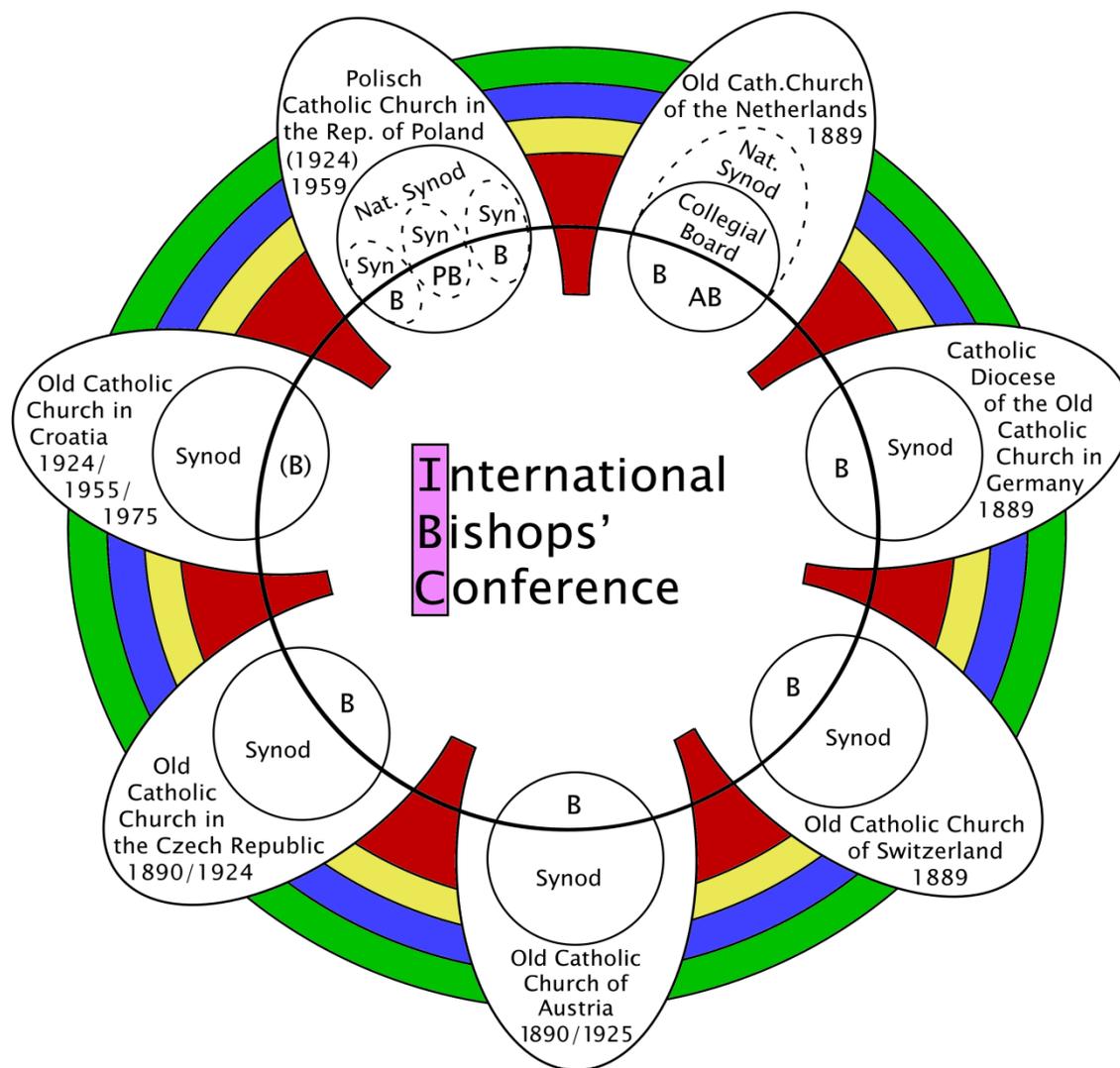
As their mandate comes to an end, the members of this dialogue, giving thanks to God, submit their report to the authorities of the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht for appropriate decision and action.

8 Appendices

8.1 Diagrammatic presentations of dioceses, structures ...

The Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht

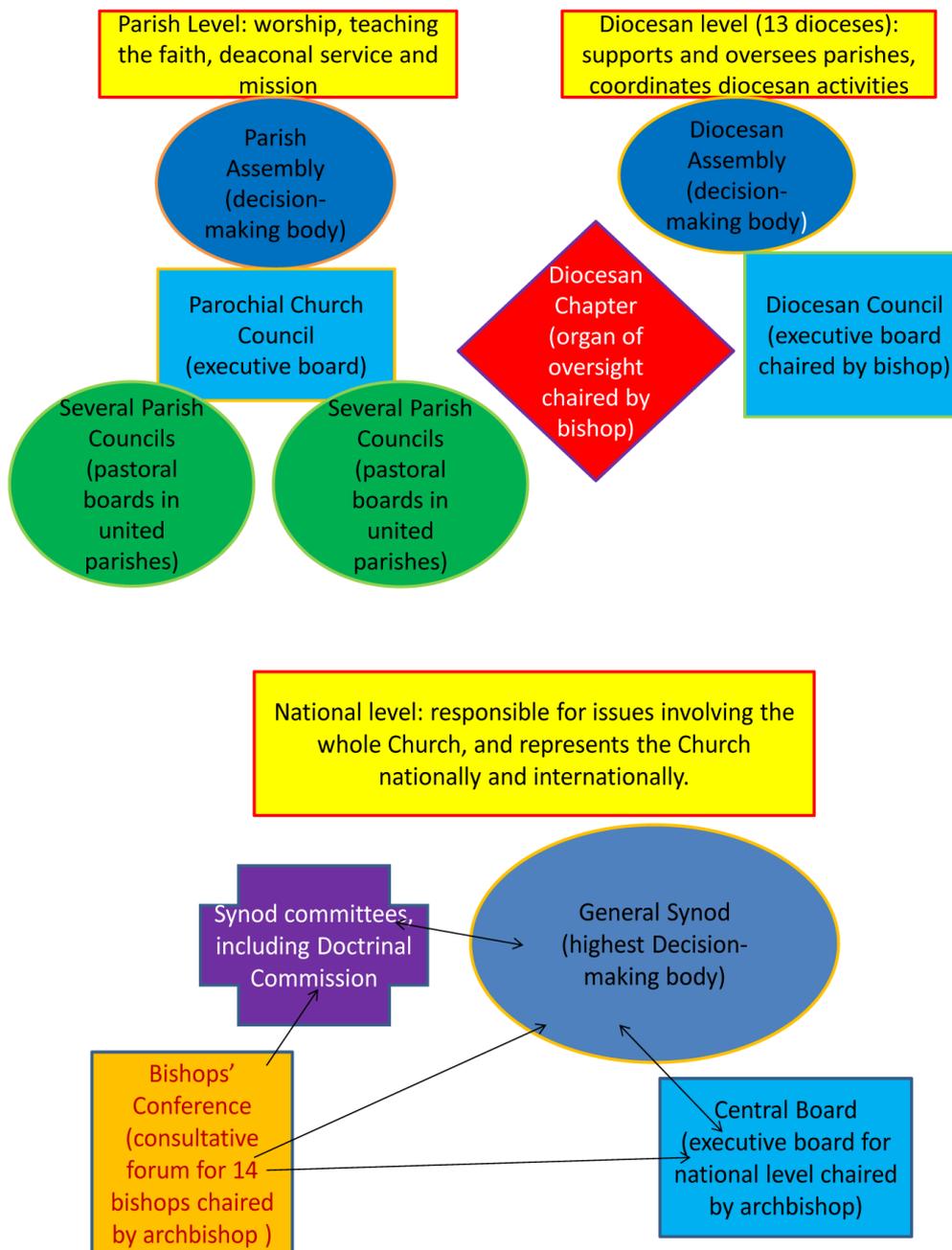
2013



- B Bishop
- AB Archbishop of Utrecht
- PB Prime Bishop
- International Old Catholic Congress, since 1890
- „Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift“, since 1911, before „Revue internationale de Théologie“, since 1893, the scholarly theological quarterly of Old Catholicism
- International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference, since 1950
- International Old Catholic Lay Forum, since 1991

Structures of the Church of Sweden

(direct elections to decision-making bodies at all levels every four years)



8.2 Meetings of the dialogue

- 1) 23rd-24th March 2005 in Haarlem NL
- 2) 19th-21st June 2006 in Sigtuna SE
- 3) 7th-8th December 2006 in Haarlem NL
- 4) 25th-27th 2008 in Sigtuna SE
- 5) 3rd -5th June 2009 in IJmuiden NL
- 6) 14th-16th December 2009 in Uppsala SE
- 7) 7th -9th June 2010 in Haarlem NL
- 8) 17th-19th Januarv 2011 in Västerås SE
- 9) 10th -12th October 2011 in Berne CH
- 10) 11th -14th April 2012 in Sigtuna SE
- 11) 3rd -5th September 2012 in Heiligenschwendli CH
- 12) 10th -12th April 2013 in Höör SE

Delegates	Place of work	Years of participation	Present at sessions
Church of Sweden			
Rt Revd Dr Jonas Jonson, co-chairman	Strängnäs	2005-2013	2-6,8-12
Revd Prof Dr Sven-Erik Brodd	Uppsala	2005-2013	1-12
Revd Dr Johan Dalman, co-secretary	Uppsala	2005-2008	1-4
Very Revd Margarethe Isberg	Västerås	2005-2012	2-4,6-8
Revd Dr Christopher Meakin, co-secretary	Uppsala	2009-2013	5-12
Union of Utrecht			
Rt Revd Dr. Dirk Jan Schoon, co-chairman	Amsterdam NL	2009-2013	5-12
Revd Peter Feenstra, co-secretary	Haarlem NL/ Berne CH	2005-2013	1-12
Revd Harald Münch	IJmuiden NL	2008-2010	4-7
Revd Prof Dr Urs von Arx	Berne CH	2009-2013	5-12
Rt Revd Dr Bert Wirix, co-chairman	Haarlem NL	2005-2006	1-3
Revd Prof Günter Esser	Bonn D	2005-2008	1,2,4