



# A Guide to Intercultural Conversations

*By The Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue*

## INTRODUCTION

The nations of the world today number 193. The worldwide Anglican Communion is present in more than 165 of them. And while it is possible to count the countries in which Anglicans live, work and worship, it is impossible to count the cultures to which we all belong, since no nation consists of a single culture. We are a multicultural Communion, and all of us are formed and nurtured (mostly unconsciously) by plural cultures. When we participate in regional provincial Synods, or official meetings of the Instruments of Communion, or large scale mission conferences, or simply in smaller informal gatherings, we are frequently engaged in intercultural conversation, among other things. This is no simple task.

**A guide to Intercultural Conversations** is a resource for those who may wish to replicate our consultation and dialogue process. Here are some of our procedures, observations, learnings, and best practices for both hosts and participants.

## PARTICIPANTS

### Participation Methodology

- Start from the premise that we are all children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. Participants should be able to accept others without prejudice, able to see where God might be at work in others' life and context. At the same time, they should be willing to engage others with differences.
- Let go of pre-conceived and stereotypical assumptions. Build assurance that openness and vulnerability will not be manipulated or disrespected.
- Learn about the local context. Do not fly in and out without encountering the people and culture where you meet. Deep, rather than superficial encounters will enrich the work of the group.
- Build agendas collaboratively. But do not be slaves to an agenda.
- Build on previous gatherings. Be mindful of previous learnings and discoveries. Bring new participants up to date, so far as possible, while inviting them to add new perspectives to the work.
- Participants require a deep trust in God's guidance, including the expectation that outcomes may be surprising and not always painless.
- Story-telling, rather than debate, enhances the ability of participants to listen. Presentations from pairs living in different contexts increases perspective and understanding.
- Decisions should be made by consensus. This is not the same as unanimity. Members are free to hold a different view from the majority. Some, for example, may not be able to sign a public statement.
- A communique, public statement, or testimony following each meeting may be useful in opening the dialogue to others in the wider Church. This fosters accountability and transparency. Critical feedback is to be welcomed and built into the process of continuing reflection.

### Participants' Best Practices

- Participants attend as individuals, not official representatives of their Province or Diocese. There is no hierarchy among participants.
- Take care to maintain confidentiality and privacy. Be aware that agreement to participate by some members may pose a risk to them.
- Members will need the virtue of humility: that is, the assumption that they will learn more than they teach, and receive more than they give.
- The African practice of "indaba" provides a rich model for honest conversations. This is a process of respectful listening in which all have the opportunity to speak and to be heard.
- Misunderstandings and misperception are a constant reality. Participants will require patience and fortitude, and the courage to be honest and transparent.



## HOSTS/ORGANIZERS

### Group Engagement Methodology

- Meetings and discussions should be in the context of prayer and Eucharist. Daily worship among the participants, as well as with local Anglican churches where possible, grounds our work sacramentally.
- Care should be taken to allow all participants, especially those who may join later, to introduce themselves and to describe their ministry.
- Build in time for theological reflection.

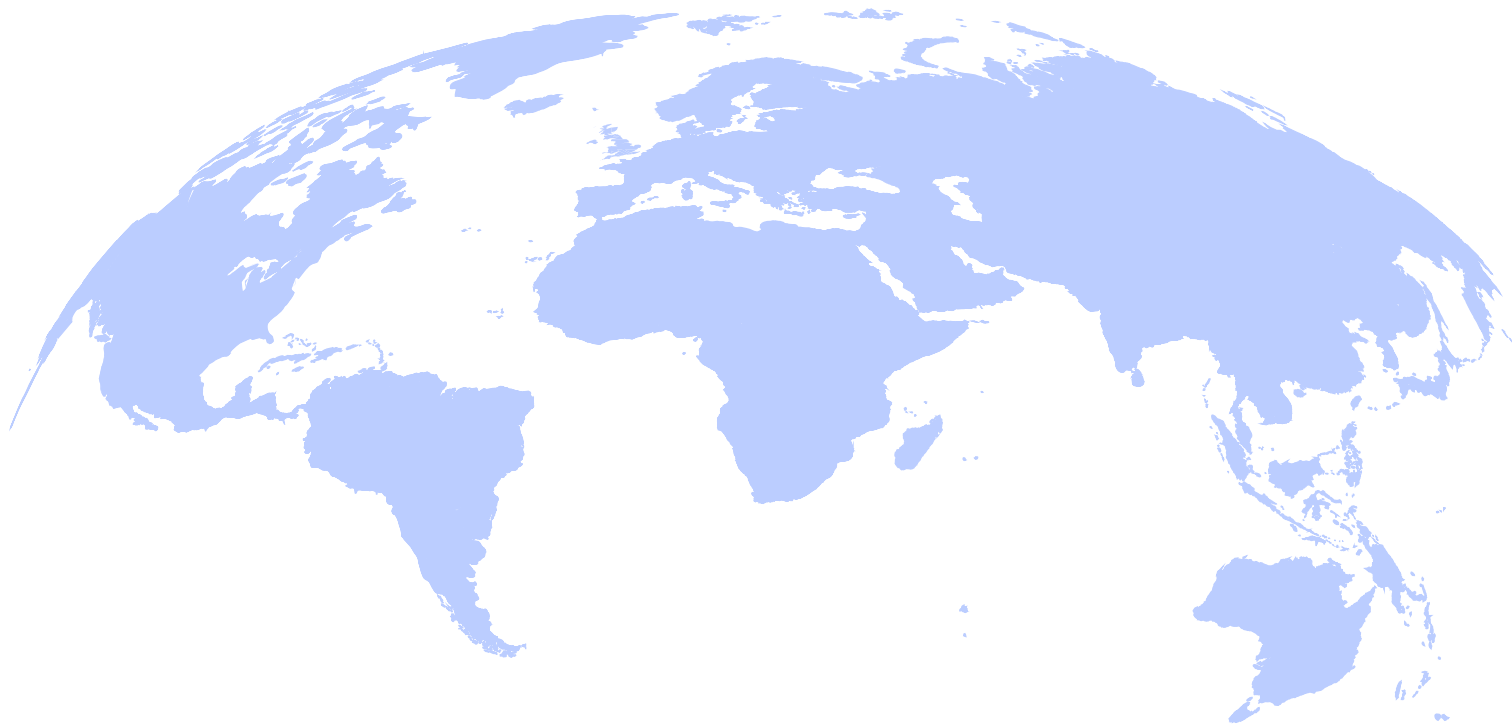
### Group Composition

- Participants should be selected to reflect a range of cultural and theological diversity. Guests may be invited as presenters (not necessarily members) with particular gifts or expertise.
- Participants should be able to make a commitment to several meetings. This is a process that grows through successive rounds of engagement. Meetings should be regularly scheduled rather than occasional and sporadic.
- Membership may evolve and change as participants are added or leave, though it is helpful to keep a core of members for stability and memory.

### Logistics

- It is desirable to meet in quite different cultures and locations.
- Funding for travel, accommodation, and hospitality should be secured in advance.
- Participants should be invited to contribute financially, either personally or from funds available to them. It is not to be expected that each participant will be able to pay an equal share.
- Staff support is vital, both for making local arrangements and in attending to communication between meetings.
- The work is intense. The participants are busy. 2-3 days should be sufficient for each gathering.
- The meetings should be residential, giving opportunities for relaxation and informal interaction among participants.





## ABOUT

**A Guide to Intercultural Conversations** is a gift to the Anglican Communion from The Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue. The Consultation was a fluid group of bishops from several African Provinces, The Anglican Church of Canada, The Church of England, The Scottish Episcopal Church and The Episcopal Church. Together they worked to mend relations and build understanding among parts of the Communion that have been in conflict. The first Consultation was held in London UK, in February 2010. Since then, the group continued to meet every year in different parts of the Communion, until the final event in Zanzibar, in February 2020. This Resource is part of the Testimony the “Bishops in Dialogue” are offering to the Anglican Communion.

For more information, please visit  
[www.anglican.ca/gr/bishopsconsultation](http://www.anglican.ca/gr/bishopsconsultation)