

Vatican announces new round of Catholic-Anglican talks

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VATICAN CITY — The formal theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion will continue and will focus on the relationship between the local church and the universal church, the Vatican announced.

This third phase of work by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission “will deal with fundamental questions regarding the church as communion local and universal, and how in communion the local and universal church comes to discern right ethical teaching,” said a Vatican announcement published Nov. 28.

The announcement was made one week after Pope Benedict XVI and Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, met at the Vatican.

The question of the relationship of the local church to the universal church has been the subject of debate both within the Catholic Church and especially in the Anglican Communion, primarily as it relates to the authority of local bishops and the authority of local churches to make decisions on matters of church practice and on moral issues.

Monsignor Mark Langham, an official at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, told Vatican Radio Nov. 26 that ARCIC III would begin with the broad question of the relationship between the local and universal church. Only then, he said, would it begin to discuss specific issues that individual Anglican provinces have dealt with separately such as the ordination of women, blessing same-sex unions and ordaining openly gay clergy.

He said the Vatican and the Anglican Communion hope the first meeting of the new commission would take place before the end of 2010, but both sides still have to appoint theologians to the commission, establish working groups and set a meeting schedule.

ARCIC was established after Pope Paul VI and Anglican Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury met in 1966.

The first round of talks, known as ARCIC I, met from 1970-82 and reached agreements on baptism, Eucharist and ministry and developed common understanding on some issues related to authority in the church. ARCIC II met from 1983-2005 and reached agreements on papal authority, salvation and the church, the church as communion and a variety of beliefs about Mary and Marian piety.

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