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In earlier bulletins, we have used the analogy of train travel to characterise the start of the Lambeth Conference. Now, however, the Bishop of Durham, Tom Wright, has brought an alarming new dimension to the metaphor, describing the Anglican Communion as "a slow-moving train-wreck, just hitting the buffers".

All of which forces one to take seriously a recent picture, now submitted to intercessors to be weighed. What is the picture? It is of a shopping trolley, with a broken wheel.

Most people have experienced the frustration of attempting to steer a laden trolley round a supermarket which will simply not go in the direction you are pushing it. And why? All because one of the wheels has become warped and is now mal-functioning. Praying about this, one recalls that a foundational document of the Anglican Communion is called the 'Lambeth Quadrilateral'.



It refers to the name given to the four key principles that form the basis for the union of various churches that make up the Anglican faith:

1. Acceptance of the Holy Scripture as the rule of faith;
2. The Apostles' and the Nicene creeds;
3. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper;
4. And the principle of church government based on bishops.



Now suppose that one of these four wheels has come off the Anglican rails? A disobedient trolley is nothing like as serious as a train-wreck, but both may have something relevant to say to Lambeth 2008. We ask you to pray into these pictures - and to [respond](#).

Anglican liberals argue that 'inculturation' demands that the Christian church must adapt to local culture. Up to a point this is undoubtedly true - - but the vital thing is that the Church must not concede the Gospel as it does so. The authority of Scripture is the anchor. As a Nigerian Christian has written: The Church should not be seen as an item of fashion that has to dance with the mood of the times. It should be a beacon or a lightning rod for the measurement of mankind's adherence to the moral principles ordained by God.

Part of the Church in Germany made a severe cultural mistake in the 1930's, drifting from beneath the authority of God's Word as Nazi philosophy and practice gained sway. The Dutch Reformed Church became similarly compromised concerning the emergence of apartheid. An uncritical identification of church and changing culture distorts the Gospel. Of course, secular society is the real enemy - pressurising the church to accept its standards as normative. Sexual ethics are not the defining test of Anglicanism - but they are certainly part of the scenario in which many 'insiders' will attempt to vandalise the shopping trolley of the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

The nature and outcome of the debates over the next two weeks will indicate whether we have a minor, and repairable, supermarket trolley problem in the Anglican shop. Or the likelihood of an imminent, and serious train crash, causing many casualties, to take out into the world's communities from Canterbury 2008.

For those of you who are just joining us, previous editions of these prayer bulletins are available on the website.

Thanks again for your prayers and [feedback](#).

John Simons (on behalf of the team)

Today in Lambeth

■ Positive responses from the Lambeth Conference opening retreat...

The bishops report that, at the worship services, people are asked to pray the Lord's Prayer in their own language. Suddenly hundreds of voices rise up in a multitude of languages - French, Spanish, and Japanese, to name but a few - and the commonality of the phrases and where we pause to breathe becomes clearly apparent. At about the same moment all the voices cease, and 'Amen's' are heard around the room. It is as clear a sign as any I have experienced so far of the common faith that gathers us together.

A number of Bishops have also remarked on the very positive atmosphere and 'spirit' they experienced through Archbishop Rowan's addresses at the Retreat days that started the Conference. As one said, the Archbishop has been "focusing on Christ, the gospel and with Jesus at the centre".

Pray: that in common worship and debate, the bishops continue to experience God's presence and each other's fellowship.

■ The ministry of SOMA (Sharing of Ministries Abroad)

SOMA (which has national bodies in nine countries) sends short-term mission teams to assist dioceses in different parts of the world, when invited by a bishop.

The teams (clergy and laity) travel at their own expense, mainly to areas where the local church has had to face conflict (for example Sudan) and/or shortage of material resources.

Their work is warmly endorsed by both George Carey (the previous Archbishop) and Rowan Williams. These Anglican leaders commend SOMA "for its distinctive renewal perspective in serving the Anglican Communion in its mission" and for "the significant difference its ministry brings in terms of long-term transformation of churches and communities".

SOMA UK is represented at Canterbury and will meet many bishops to offer its distinctive ministry of renewal and encouragement.

Pray: that the Holy Spirit will guide in conversations and encounters, to open the way for many invitations for SOMA teams to minister abroad in the years ahead. Also for teams to come to the UK to bring refreshment and blessing here, which is so much needed in the 21st Century.

[More:](#)

■ What on earth is the Lambeth Conference?

Many non-Anglican Christians are kindly praying for benefit to come from Lambeth 2008.

In the event they are mystified by some of the Anglican ways and words, [this background article](#) may be helpful to bring them on board with more understanding as to the 'what', if not the 'why'.

Pray: for the Holy Spirit's leading, that the bishops will discern God's will for the Anglican Church amid the external pressures of secularism, the crying needs of the world's poor, and the internal clamour of ecclesiastical divisions.

[More:](#)

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