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Friday 1 August '08

Anglican identity crisis?

The issues before the bishops at Canterbury have been soft-focused, by some commentators, into the question 'Can we recognize the 'Church' in one another? Or to put it another way, 'Do we see Christ in each another'?

One influential background fact, not widely reported, is that no less than 70% of the bishops have never attended a Lambeth Conference before. This being so, they have needed time to 'play themselves in' and adapt to each other, to linguistic and cultural settings, as well as to the Agenda.

The opening Retreat, Bible Studies, and ensuing Indaba groups have greatly contributed to this process and to the building of personal relationships, which are being highly valued.

Rowan's address, characterised by some as adding to a polarisation of the Conference, has at least been a frank recognition of the underlying divisive facts. Opinions differ as to whether this was fence-sitting or faith-building. However, across the theological spectrum, a great many valuable relationships and clarifications are being forged. Lambeth has not been all bitterness and quarrels (though there is plenty of it). So we are glad to acknowledge that much that is positive has already come from Lambeth. Also to hold to a firm conviction that much is still wrong at Canterbury, and will not be helped by 'Norman Vincent Peale mushy niceness' (as it has been termed) which side-steps the real issues, which are crucial for the integrity of the Gospel.

It all comes down to interpretation, say the liberals. This reminds one of Lewis Carroll, an Anglican clergyman as well as an author (Alice through the Looking Glass) and mathematician. Humpty Dumpty's memorable attitude to words could be written in fluorescent script across some parts of the Tent of Meeting. When I use a word, Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.' 'The question is', said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean different things.' 'The question is', said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master - that's all.' As Lambeth 2008 runs out of time, it is a power-play as well as a cultural/theological tug of war. What will the Anglican Communion be, when all the bishops have returned home? For a most helpful exploration of this question, please follow the link to: <http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page.cfm?ID=310>, where Graham Kings, vicar of St. Mary's Islington, has a posting.

A story is related about an Anglican bishop who made a pastoral visit to a Care Home for the Elderly. He knelt down in his purple cassock beside one resident, and asked the elderly lady 'Do you know who I am?' She replied with a smile, 'No. But if you ask the Warden, I'm sure she'll tell you'.

In this Anglican Identity Crisis, Rowan Williams does not readily look like a Warden equipped with all the definitive answers. The Conference will produce no Resolutions or Declarations. Instead, over the last couple of days, the remaining bishops (some have already gone home) are to be limited to "reflections" on a proposal from the Archbishop to create a "pastoral forum" for the 77-million-member church, the mandate of which would be to keep the homosexual debate frozen in place and prohibited from going anywhere.

The document handed out to bishops outlining the forum's creation also proposed that the Anglican Communion's 38 autonomous national and regional churches (called provinces) observe three moratoriums - on blessing same-sex unions, consecrating gay clergy in partnered relationships and poaching clergy and congregations across provincial boundaries who have become disaffected from their bishops.

These Lambeth proposals would be decided upon, or maybe more likely once again be 'creatively deferred' at next May's meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, a sort of executive body of the world church. In the unlikely event that the three moratoria prove to actually have teeth, the Anglicans will need warders rather than a kindly warden.

Thank you for your continued prayers and partnership with us in Pray Lambeth. [Feedback is welcome.](#)

John Simons (on behalf of the team)



Today in Lambeth

Friday's Agenda:

Here is Friday's agenda. **HINT!** - If the image is not displaying below, you may need to 'right click' to download the graphic, or check your email software settings. Click 'Print Version' above to print the Prayer Bulletin.

Friday 1st August 2008

ORDINARY DAY 10: FOSTERING OUR COMMON LIFE: THE BISHOP, THE ANGLICAN COVENANT AND THE WINDSOR PROCESS			
TIME	EVENT	DETAILS	LOCATION
06:30	Morning Prayer	With the Chaplaincy Team	Prayer Place
07:15	Morning Worship	Eucharist: The Church of Pakistan (United)	Big Top
08:15	Breakfast		Eliot/Rutherford Dining Rooms
09:15	Bible Study Groups	John 15 : 1 – 17 'I am the true vine'	Allocated Bible Study Rooms in Eliot
10:30	Tea		Keynes Lobby
11:00	Indaba Groups	Fostering our Common Life: The Bishop, the Anglican Covenant and the Windsor Process (1)	Keynes Building
13:00	Lunch		Eliot/Rutherford Dining Rooms and other outlets
14:00	Hearings	Conference Reflections 4	Spouses' Main Venue
Free Time			
15:30	Tea		Keynes Lobby
16:00	Indaba Groups	Fostering our Common Life: The Bishop, the Anglican Covenant and the Windsor Process (2)	Keynes Building
17:45	Evening Worship	Church of the Province of South East Asia	Big Top
19:00	Evening Meal		Eliot/Rutherford Dining Rooms
Free Evening – Fringe Events – see pages 83 – 91			
21:45	Night Prayer		Prayer Place

Pray: Please feel free to use the agenda in whatever way you like to prompt your prayer cover over the day's proceedings. Click the more link to the right to find further information from the main Lambeth Conference website.

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From the Conference...

Lambeth voices: a panel of Anglican bishops share their views

Bishop Mouneer Anis of Egypt, Primate of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East:

I found the presidential address of Archbishop Rowan very clear. He clearly described what is happening and the thinking of people on both sides. I found his address helpful and very honest in expressing both sides of the conflict. While some very positive things are happening at the conference, some unresolved issues are still dividing the Communion. Those issues are still very much unresolved and untackled. I wonder if during the next few days we will do something about these unresolved issues. I have some doubts. The positives are that we are sitting down together, we are studying the Bible together, we are talking to each other and we are listening to each other.

Yet I see that a big wall still divides us. It is big because it involves the essentials, the foundation of our faith. We are not divided by mere trivialities, or issues on the periphery of faith. We are finding it very hard to come together in the essentials. This diversity of opinion is about the heart of our faith, the faith which we received from the saints. I speak the mind of many of my colleagues in the Global South, especially in the Diocese of Egypt. I am aware that not all of us in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East have the same mind. I respect and love them

I find that many of our North American friends blame us and criticise us for bringing in the issues of sexuality and homosexuality but in fact they are the ones who are bringing these issues in. Here at Lambeth, you come across many advertisements for events organised by gay and Lesbian activists which are sponsored by the North American Church. If you visit the marketplace at the conference, you will notice that almost half the events promoted on the noticeboard promote homosexuality and are sponsored by the North Americans. And in the end, we, the people who remain loyal to the original teaching of the Anglican Communion, which we received from the Apostles, are blamed. They say that we talk a lot about sexuality and that we need to talk more about poverty, about AIDs, and injustice. They are the ones who are bringing sexuality into this conference. It's not us. We want to talk about the heart of the issues which divide us, not only sexuality. That is just a symptom of a deeper problem.

They talk about the slavery and say that 200 years ago Christians were opposed to the freedom of slaves and they compare us to those Christians for our attitude to gay and lesbian practises. To be honest, I think this is inviting us to another kind of slavery, slavery of the flesh, to go and do whatever our lusts dictate. Sometimes, I think that maybe because of the pressure in Western culture to push the practise of homosexuality, our friends in the West are pushing these issues. But, on the other hand, I see many who live in the West and still want to preserve the faith and the tradition of the Church. Should we allow culture to pressure the Church or should the Church be distinctive, light and salt to the world? Cardinal Ivan Dias said that we

didn't bring the Gospel to the culture we could end up suffering from spiritual Alzheimers."

Other bishops who contributed to the discussion were:

Catharine Roskam, Suffragan bishop of New York; Kirk Smith, bishop of Arizona; Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales; Ian Ernest, Archbishop of the Indian Ocean, Bishop of Mauritius; Todd Mcgregor, Bishop of Madagascar

Pray: For this reason, since the day we first heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Colossians 1:9-11

[More:](#)

■ Bishops and wife-beating

There are times at Canterbury among the bishops when it feels like a classic UK Conservative Party gathering in the 90's, with everyone pretending to be united - until someone spoke out.

Such a moment arrived yesterday when the Rt Rev Catherine Roskam, Suffragan Bishop of New York, declared in a liberal magazine article that some of the bishops here at the conference are wife-beaters.

"We have 700 male bishops here. Do you think any of them beat their wives? Chances are they do. Many of our bishops come from places where it is culturally acceptable to beat your wife," she wrote.

She said that domestic violence is deemed acceptable in some parts of the world and that "even the most devout Christians are guilty of it".

"In that regard, it makes the conversation quite difficult." She didn't actually use the A-word, but Africa figured large in the article. It ranks with the moment at the last Lambeth Conference 10 years ago when Bishop John Shelby Spong said that Animism was still a problem with some African Christians, who had believed that trees and rocks had spirits, and did not understand modern science.

Bishop Catherine Roskam's comments have been denounced as outrageous and untrue, and a further example of the condescending attitude of certain western Christians to those in developing countries. Archbishop John Chew, the Primate of South-East Asia, said: "I don't think it is true—the church speaks out against this kind of behaviour".

Where Bishop Roskam was spot on was that it makes conversation quite difficult. Africans and conservatives (not always the same thing) turned on her to express various degrees of outrage.

Pray:

Prayer for the Day

For the scream in the night
We pretend not to hear;
For the cutting remark
We choose to ignore.
FORGIVE US O GOD, AND OPEN OUR EARS
For the cuts and the bruises
We pretend not to see;
For the look of dull terror
We choose to avoid;
FORGIVE US O GOD, AND OPEN OUR EYES
For the quiet desperation
We pretend we imagined;
For the gossip and whispers
We choose not to check out;
FORGIVE US O GOD, AND OPEN OUR HEARTS
To the need and the longing we pretend isn't there;
To the right to a safe place we choose to deny
OPEN OUR HANDS,
THAT YOUR LOVE MAY REACH OUT
TO ALL WHO SUFFER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THIS DAY. Amen.



[More:](#)

■ Fence-sitting or Faith-building?

Nick Baines (Bishop of Croydon) reflects:

The moral and spiritual authority of Rowan is obvious. When people criticise him for lack of leadership, they need to realise what he is doing here. In the light of the Scriptures and faithful to Christian history he seeks to enable Christians of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to recognise the call of Christ to a ministry of reconciliation for the sake of the world.

He refuses to let us off the hook by allowing us to indulge in politics without being reminded of the challenging and costly vocation to carry a cross and lay down our life (and our rights).

His call to different wings of the Church to offer a 'generous love' to those on other sides is not the appeal of a weak man. In true Christian - and cruciform - style, he stands between people and, arms outstretched - holds them together even though in doing so he is pulled apart.

To call this 'weak leadership' is to call the Cross a pointless gesture.

Rowan did something risky but powerful. He tried to articulate - give voice to - the thinking and feelings of people on different sides of our current divides.

I think he demonstrated his real ability to understand and express what different people are thinking and saying. He gave generous expression to their point of view and enabled us to see what it feels like to think the way 'the other' does. In so doing, he also exposed the dark sides of passionately felt theological and ecclesiological positions. This was a brutally honest expression.

Pray: for the bishops to get enough sleep; for those who are exhausted, to be revived; and for each one to have time to listen to God as well as to each other

[More:](#)

■ Rome warns Anglicans who contemplate jumping ship

"The ordination of women is not a good enough reason for an Anglican to be received into the Catholic Church," Mgr Andrew Foley, the Westminster-based RC ecumenical representative on the Synod, said.

While the RC Bishops of England and Wales would maintain a "generous welcome" towards lay people and male clerics who felt that they could no longer stay in the C of E, there was no "fast track" or "respray" for Anglican priests who wanted to serve as Roman Catholic priests, he said.

The Pope now fears this is at risk. He worries that the Church of England, which for centuries has prided itself on being both catholic and reformed, could mutate into hardline Protestantism.

He is at one with Dr Williams on this. The two leaders have a strong personal empathy and share a deep and sophisticated theology. Both emphasise the importance of reason as well as faith. Which is why those Anglican bishops who recently approached the Vatican to ask if traditionalist C of E parishes could migrate en masse to Rome, under an Anglican liturgical rite, were sent off with a flea in their ear.

Roman Catholic insiders say there are two motives behind the Pope's concerns. A decision has been taken within the Roman Catholic hierarchy that it is in its interests for the Anglican Church to maintain unity. Despite speculation about a group of conservative bishops breaking away to the Roman church, senior Catholics say such a move would be "premature", and that they are not encouraging defections.

The other reason is that the Pope has developed a strong personal relationship with Dr Williams. "They get on, they are both theologians," a source said last night.

Pray: for all Anglicans who are in a quandary about their future spiritual home within, or outside, the Communion.

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Global Input...

Feedback from intercessors, near and far

Picture of horse tamed, tied up and ready for the rider. (Anglican Communion – Rowan is the rider)

Wild, then tamed - "meeked" - Taught to listen to the master's voice, respond

James 3:1-12

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.

4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

Pray: that all will humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and the Conference be 'meeked', for His glory and the good of the Communion.

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