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It is heartening to read the statement from the 5th Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue from Coventry England, May 2014 *A Testimony of Our Journey Towards Reconciliation*. These meetings between bishops from Africa and North America, continuing conversations begun at the 2008 Lambeth Conference, are encouraging signs of hope.

I found the location of this fifth meeting in Coventry Cathedral--with its rich heritage and leadership in the ministry of reconciliation--and the participation of the current Archbishop of Canterbury, inspiring. The creative melding together of themes from St. Paul's two letters to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13: 12; 2 Corinthians 5: 18-20) was particularly fascinating linking together an existential agnosticism ('...now we see in a mirror dimly...now I know only in part...') with a clarion call to reconciliation ('..Christ...has given us the ministry of reconciliation...'). Holding together the sense of not knowing with the eschatological call to reconciliation articulates an important acknowledgement of the deep need to listen, understand and work tirelessly toward the reconciliation to which we are called.

There are numerous phrases in the bishops' testimony that offer hope to a communion deeply affected by differences in theological and ethical views: it was encouraging to read, "It is in this middle ground between what was and what will be that all Christian people stand, but it is *the particular vocation of Anglicans to stand in the middle, to be the incarnate people of reconciliation.*" The great *via media*, the comprehensiveness characteristic of classical Anglicanism has, sadly, been overshadowed, in recent years by an Internet-fueled conflict between competing theologies. In that light, the statement affirms the love experienced in the community of bishops gathered, the '*movement of the Spirit in our midst filling us with courage that the hand of God will lead us, break apart the barriers around us and reveal bridges God has already laid across the chasms of broken relationships. In our diversity, cultural, racial, geographic and indeed theological, we are convinced that what binds us together is greater and stronger than what divides.*' Amen!

The centrality of prayer and worship at Coventry within the architectural witness of that holy place shines through the Bishops' statement and it was particularly moving to read of the intercessions of the bishops: "*During our time together, we upheld and prayed for South Sudan,*"
The Very Rev. Peter Elliott reflection on "A Testimony of Our Journey Toward Reconciliation."
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Kenya, Nigeria, Syria, and other areas of the world experiencing conflict.” Grounded in prayer, focused on reconciliation, inspired by the leadership of the Archbishop and in the context of a Cathedral community who have experienced the destruction of conflict, the Bishops clearly grew closer together as a community. Sadly lacking however, in my perspective, was any reference, in the closing statement, to issues of human sexuality, particularly the divisive issue of inclusion of the LGBT community in the life of the communion. While I am aware that the conversation seeks to explore wider contextual issues of culture and theology, I am particularly concerned for gay people in countries where homosexual identity or activity is illegal with punishment ranging from imprisonment to the death penalty. I hope that these consultations continue, that the ground work that is being so carefully laid will, in the future, enable the bishops to address more openly the many areas in the world where oppression and violence continue to touch and affect people, including, but not limited to, the experience of those Anglicans and others in every part of the Communion who identify as part of the LGBT community.

Prof. Wendy Fletcher
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For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

The statement which comes from the fifth consultation of Anglican Bishops in dialogue, much like the tapestry hanging in Coventry cathedral from which it draws its primary theological metaphor, is a work of beauty. The theological strands which form the warp and weft of its meaning are poetic and artfully arranged, as a powerful witness to the vision held by its framers for our Anglican future. Affirming Anglican identity in this generation as family, rather than church as its primary form, it invites members of the Anglican world into a new form of intimacy which predicates all on radical faith. Perhaps as a first thing, this document names our very human fragility, our unabashed brokenness as a primary reality in the story of how we have lived together, but sets this fragility against the backdrop of an unabashed trust that God is in the midst of us doing a new thing. Our work in this story is to so trust the promise of God intent upon the reconciliation of all things, that it becomes real in the very act of how we live together in the midst of our trauma and limited vision. Our trust itself reflected in our commitment to respect and loving kindness with one another becomes the witness that God's new day is not only a future eschatology but present, enfleshed in the very text of our often disappointing ordinary time.

The work that the Bishops have done together in the act of creating this statement, is itself just such a witness. I experience this text as a thin place, as the Celts would have said. In my consideration of their ordinary time experience, I glimpse the extra-ordinary. I can see a new world coming. I can imagine with them a way to hold Anglican life and practice which is deeply grounded in the historic Anglican way: the very middle road itself, which by its very nature models and enfleshes the reconciliation God makes real through embrace of division and death on the cross, and resurrection by way of the same. If we can imagine it, we can live it. In fact, in the very act of imagination we live it. A wise one once said, "Be careful how you see the world: it IS like that." May it be so. May the world named and summoned by the words of the Bishops' text be a harbinger which draws us toward a world of loving kindness, mutual respect and understanding which births deep and abiding communion for us in this world and in the next. May to be so.

Professor Wendy Fletcher reflection on "A Testimony of Our Journey Toward Reconciliation." June 2014

Prof. Sammy Githuku
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The initiative is great. It must be the work of the Holy Spirit. It must continue. I join others before me to thank those whom the Lord led to launch this initiative. Engaging in dialogue is a form of loving your neighbour. The testimonies and commitments made by the Bishops are a reflection of God fearing Church Fathers. If everyone lives by them the first fruits of dialogue will be evident soon.

Jesus prayed '*that they may be one, as we are*'. Dialogue is the only way to make this prayer of Jesus a reality. From the roll call, it seems most of the Bishops are from Africa. Each capital city in Africa is "Jerusalem" for those of us who come from this continent. African Bishops should start microcosms of dialogues in their own Sees. Bishops, especially in Africa are influential public figures that can stop war, conflicts, rivalry, and ethnic violence through dialogue in their respective countries. In my view, they could enrich the consultation with practical experiences drawn from such forums in their countries of origin.

I note that the consultation bares in mind the different contexts. Let me illustrate how a leaf from the African culture can form a dialogue of reconciliation. In Kikuyu culture, reconciliation is "*kuiguithanania* [a noun literally meaning " to make one another hear, understand, see one another's point of view]. It is a face to face conversation of parties concern, with a moderator. The goal of *kuiguithanania* is to bring understanding, heal the injured, restore justice [if it was denied], forgive, and restore peace and normality. The parties are not forced into it. They choose to undertake it because it is the best way out of any conflict or misunderstanding. It is also normal to impose fines of wrong done. In our case Jesus has paid it all.

The point I am making is this: for dialogue to be fully engaging to connect with the participants reality it must be expressed through different cultures. Holding the fifth consultation in Coventry was a move in the right direction.

Greetings to all my Lord Bishops.

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The report, *Testimony of Our Journey toward Reconciliation*, which was issued by the fifth Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue in the City of Coventry, UK, from the 22nd to the 25 of May 2014 is worth commenting on. Christianity is all about reconciliation. Jesus Christ came to reconcile the world to His Father. His great commandment “love one another” is nothing if not a call to reconciliation. In this regard, Christians are called to reconcile to each other and to the Father. We Anglicans cannot excuse ourselves from this great task. If ‘charity always begins at home’ then the task of reconciling the failing world can only be done if ‘the charity has taken place at home’.

It is important to note however that we are living in a world of differences. It is through these differences that the Anglican Communion came into being and survived to this day. The differences are the challenges which led Communion to develop several instruments, statements of faith, as well as articles of commitment. Here again the bishops have come with a covenant to commitment. While I believe that this is a very good start toward reconciliation, there is a need for a clear explanation as to how this new commitment to walk together is different from other ways the Church has formulated.

Prof. Esther Mombo
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The report which is entitled A Testimony of Our Journey toward Reconciliation is timely. The ministry of reconciliation, has been given to us as Paul affirms that God reconciled us through Christ and conferred upon us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), in Christ's name, and we are ambassadors of that ministry (2nd Corinthians 5:20). Paul's context may have been different from ours. However, there existed divisions in his society as they exist today for different or similar reasons.

The report comes to us against the backdrop of a world in turmoil with negative implications on all in society but especially on women and children. We think of the conflicts in the Sudan, Egypt, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Central Republic of Congo; the atrocities committed in Northern Nigeria and Somalia, just to name a few places in Africa. There are many perpetrators and victims of wars and terror. In my own country, we are in a context of tension as a result of hate, intolerance, corruption and terrorism. In all these places the presence of the church is noticeable and for those who are Anglican leaders with a testimony of reconciliation are expected to practice. The divisions in the Anglican Communion, rooted in biblical and theological differences are within the context of the realities mentioned above.

It is with this background that I read the report. This dialogue is as an important process because it exemplifies how different groups can talk at the same table. It provides a window of hope that there is a willingness to listen and to talk to one another. The test of any dialogue is how it is reflected in the different contexts facing different conflict situations both at the church, political and social economic levels. The reception of this report is crucial especially in those areas where the leadership of the church has used the divisions in the Anglican Communion as an excuse to ignore issues such as gender based violence, marginalization and discrimination, which are critical in reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation should not be used to deny people justice as it were or to cover up peoples hurt and pain.

Reconciliation is not a hasty quick fix. It is a process in which certain conditions must be met if we can come to terms with one another. In this case we acknowledge that at times we are in conflict trying to maintain legitimate interests and values and we get at loggerhead with one another.

One of the fears different groups in the Anglican Communion have is that reconciliation is not facing up to the issue of justice. This is on both sides because of the way justice is defined. When one looks at how justice has been defined by the powerful, it has been in abstract discussions. There is a preoccupation with defending God's saving acts over against human merits that do not save. Reconciliation is part of God's mission. The church exists for mission much more than anything else. This coincides with the recommendations of the Testimony. It includes reaching out to others in the effort of reconciliation even when others do not respond. Leading one another to a deeper life of faithfulness and discipleship.

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I am encouraged and discouraged at the same time by the “Testimony” of our “Anglican Bishops in Dialogue”. I am encouraged that they are meeting at all! And that they are doing so as an explicit act of faith in Christ and in his life and purpose. But I am discouraged that, after several consultations, their common statement remains articulate only at the level of numbingly broad generality. It is as if “reconciliation” in Christ were an abstract theme, and not one mired in the particulars of specific acts and responses, about which the statement is silent.

It is encouraging that, in the midst of ongoing anger and recrimination among Communion bishops and leaders, ones that continue to include litigation and explicit excommunication, these bishops are willing to gather together to pray and maintain their witness as brothers and sisters in Christ, even in the midst profound disagreement. As the “Testimony” makes clear, such gathering is vital and demanded in a world of continued and embedded violence and division. If Christians cannot do this, then their own faith is vain. So, I commend them for doing so, in some cases in the face of personal ridicule and rebuke.

But why cannot we hear about the actualities at issue in *this* particular Christian press for reconciliation? Coventry Cathedral, site of their meeting, became a symbol for this goal because of very specific realities: the terrors of National Socialism in Germany, aggression and resistance in the Second World War, the genocide of Jews, and the need to bring together peoples and Christians of Britain and Europe out of the ruins of *this* conflict and its specific meanings. Anglicans around the world, analogously, are estranged due to specific actions and commitments, and their reconciliation cannot bypass these matters by appeal to something mistily beyond them. It is discouraging to hear about “eschatology” and ecclesial “family” in the face of our divisions, when what is demanded is the toughness and sacrifice of concrete negotiation in Christ one Church over matters of articulated belief, biblical interpretation, and moral witness. The theology of the “Testimony”, in this case, smacks of dilution and avoidance.

So: I hope the Consultation will continue; and I will be praying for its participants, and that their number will grow. There is no understanding, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation without meeting face to face, often with exhausting patience. But I will also be

praying that they do far more than report on the vague traces of a meandering journey, but will finally engage the very specific “sword” that pierces each other’s heart in the light following Jesus together at this time and in the midst of our very peculiar challenges as Anglicans.