

The Sixth Consultation
of
Anglican Bishops in Dialogue

Richmond, Virginia
May 27th-31st, 2015

A Testimony of Love: Bearing One Another's Burden

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ Galatians 6:2

The Sixth Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue took place in the City of Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A. from May 27th through May 31st, 2015. Our gathering continues the ongoing commitment of Bishops from North America and Africa following the Lambeth Conference of 2008 to meet annually for consultation, fellowship and mutual support within the context of our shared ministry of leadership in the Mission of Jesus Christ.

Our consultation remains informal in nature and provides tremendous opportunities for fellowship, learning, discussion and discernment. We do not gather in response to any particular authority. We are not required to produce action plans, recommendations and decisions. We participate as individual bishops resolved to walk together, seeking the leading of the Spirit of the Living God who can appear in surprising ways wherever two or three are gathered in the Name of Christ.

Following our meeting in Coventry, England in May 2014 we were determined to continue a shared commitment to the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to us by Christ, to learn more about each other's missional contexts and to deepen our understanding of the cultural influences on theology that underpins reconciliation. We further committed to uphold one another in prayer and challenged each other to deeper lives of faith and discipleship.

We are sincerely grateful for the invitation from Bishop Shannon Johnston and the Diocese of Virginia to come to the City of Richmond and meet at the Richmond Hill Retreat Center, Church Hill. From London to Dar es Salaam and Toronto, to Cape Town and Coventry, the location of our meetings has enhanced discussions in special ways. We have been reminded time and again that the Spirit calls to us both in the midst of our dialogue and from the place where we meet together.

The roots of ministry at the Richmond Hill Retreat Center extend back to the mid 1860s, toward the ending of the American Civil War and mass emancipation of remaining enslaved Africans. The City of Richmond, which stood as the capital of the Confederacy, was the largest source of enslaved Africans on the east coast of America from 1830 to 1860. The slave trade was enormously important to the City's economy and development. In 1865, Richmond lay in ruins with most of its civil infrastructure destroyed and social fabric in tatters. The Roman Catholic Order of the Sisters of the Visitation of Monte Maria arrived during this tumultuous period and in 1866 created an intentional place of daily prayer focused upon the healing of the City. They continued in this mission until 1987 when the current Community of Richmond Hill

purchased the monastery property. This ecumenical Community has dedicated itself and the Richmond Hill Retreat Center to prayer for the healing of the City in contemporary times.

We became acutely aware of the challenges in addressing the pain of present generations resulting from the wounds of history. A number of us walked a portion of the Richmond Slave Trail which chronicles the history of the trade of enslaved people from Africa to Virginia until 1775, and away from Richmond to other locations in the Americas until 1865. We learned once again it is not easy to fully face the pain of division whether its roots are social, ideological, economic or racial. Seeking understanding and healing requires a firm but gentle approach, leading people away from denial or the natural desire toward easy solutions. We experienced once again the importance of our ministry as bishops calling others to join with us in the hard, long term, often painstaking work of reconciliation.

We were encouraged by the Diocese of Virginia's ongoing work of explicitly bringing the need for Christian reconciliation out into the open in every one of its congregations. These efforts concern both the ministry of racial reconciliation and, very specifically, ecclesiastical reconciliation. The Diocese is hosting a year-long Indaba process on racism in America today. This process and the Diocese's commitment to healing and a common witness with those who have broken away from the Diocese of Virginia and The Episcopal Church as a result of controversies among those who worship in our Anglican tradition are truly inspirational. These are pressing issues in present times. Such vision and work are clear examples of the common goals and prayers of the Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue since its beginning in 2008.

We gathered around the theme of "Bearing One Another's Burden" (Galatians 6:2) beginning with study of this chapter in St. Paul's letter to the people of Galatia. We considered burdens to be that which threatens to crush the joy of our faith—a tragedy that leads us to doubt God's goodness or a sin that drags one into guilt and judgment. We noted St. Paul addresses this portion of his letter to those who are spiritual, that is spiritual leaders who rely on the extraordinary Spirit producing in them love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

We acknowledge there are those within our Churches who look to gatherings such as ours with a profound sense of hope for leadership within the Communion, for consultation grounded in the love of Christ calling us to be agents and ministers of reconciliation. We sense there are those beyond our conversations who yearn for leadership that struggles through the sharp pain of disagreement and conflict, pausing to feel the firm foundation of Christ that can never fracture or be rent asunder.

We recognize this hope for effective leadership within the Communion extends into the wider world where recurring cycles of violence incite force against force and the demonization of those from whom we are different or in disagreement or in conflict. The message of hope in the Great Commandment of Christ does not return evil for evil, hate for hate and violence for violence but calls for the still more excellent way (1 Cor 12:31). We are called to follow Christ who commanded Peter to return his sword to its sheath in the midst of those who came to lay violent hands upon Jesus (St. John 18:11).

We have discovered our times together have been personally transformative. We have become companions in our common life in Christ within the Anglican Communion. We believe our companionship has resulted from a shared commitment to continue a common journey. The firm foundation upon which we stand has been made all the more clear. This was made evident as Bishop Julius Kalu of Mombasa recalled sharing Easter greetings in his cathedral from Archbishop Colin Johnson of Toronto at the moment Bishop Kalu's cathedral fell under threat from a suspected terrorist attack. Moments such as these are a powerful reminder of the importance of knowing one another as people, and of the need for the Church to speak with one voice when and where any part of it faces persecution.

We testify to the following in the spirit of 1 John 1:3 "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ."

We testify:

1. We do not intend to exacerbate the conflicts and tensions existing within the Anglican Communion today. We are called to work together to facilitate healing and reconciliation. While those of us who are part of this consultation come from differing points of view on issues which cause anger and frustration within our common life, such as matters related to human sexuality, our differences do not fracture the unity of Christ. We need not walk apart in discerning the mission of Christ in the world.
2. We are called to the ministry of servant leadership, acknowledging that wherever two or three are gathered together in the Name of Christ, Christ promises to be present with us. We are called to shepherd the flock entrusted to us by Christ, not to lord over others as rulers.
3. All of humanity is created in the image of God and each person with whom we interact is to be respected in their dignity as a human being, created and passionately loved by God. If the imperative of Christian hospitality extends to the stranger and foreigner alike it must also extend to a brother or sister who calls upon the Name of Jesus Christ.
4. The call to bear one another's burdens places upon us an imperative to draw upon the gifts given to us by the Spirit of the Living God.
5. To the blessing of our life together in and as the Anglican Communion. Our Christian walk and pilgrimage together as Bishops within the Communion draws us toward a deeper engagement with one another and the world. We are encouraged that planning continues for a future Lambeth Conference of Bishops. We hope for an early declaration by the Archbishop of Canterbury. His intention to call us together will signify commitment to Anglican unity within the Body of Christ. We are concerned

that uncertainty surrounding the future of the Lambeth Conference serves to fuel the fires of fear with regard to the future of the Anglican Communion.

6. Fear is the common enemy of faith and we resolve to confront fear where we encounter it in the love of Jesus Christ.
7. Our common identity as Anglicans has been served well through the work of the four Instruments of Communion and also through many informal networks and agencies of the Church which maintain a global mission focus, such as the Mother's Union and other women's organizations, Anglican Alliance, the eleven Communion Networks, and much more. We are encouraged by the fact other dialogues such as ours are taking place and we pray for their continued growth.
8. To the truth within the statement of the Rev'd Canon John Mbiti of the Anglican Church of Kenya: "I am because we are and since we are therefore I am". We are diminished to the point of jeopardizing our humanity when we seek to isolate ourselves from one another. The power of Christian community is found in its relationships, grounded in Christ and shared among one another. We must never flag in our resolve to safeguard our common life which is the very existence of each of us within the Body of Christ.

We continue our commitment to:

- Pray for each other, each other's Churches and missional contexts.
- Uphold the Archbishop of Canterbury in his ministry through our prayers, public statements and actions, recalling his request that we pray he will lead with wisdom, patience and courage.
- Take our Testimony back to the places from where we have come for reflection, discussion and action.
- Challenge and correct misinformation
- Share the personal journey we have experienced over these consultations and encourage others toward similar conversation and dialogue
- Reach out to all brothers and sisters in Christ in the spirit of unity and reconciliation, especially where relationship is strained or impaired and where we would not be welcome.

We further commit:

- To going slowly in our discernment and decisions as they touch upon our life together in the Communion, acknowledging the integrity of the Spirit's leading within our respective Dioceses and Provinces.
- To share stories from within our Dioceses that witness to the strength of our common identity in the Anglican Communion.
- To encourage the creation and maintaining of informal alliances and initiatives to draw us closer together in the global mission of Jesus Christ.

- To meet again.

We have been blessed by our time in Richmond and encouraged through gathering around the common theme of “Bearing One Another’s Burdens”. We assembled in the name of Jesus Christ who assures us that all who come to Him, laying aside their heavy earthly labours and burdens, will find rest and recreation. We have felt His light yoke, learned from His teaching and found rest in our souls.

We extend a sincere thank you to the host Diocese of Virginia team, especially Bishop Shannon Johnston, Bishop Susan Goff, Mr. Buck Blanchard, The Rev’d Ed Jones, Ms. Amy Williams, Ms. Ashley Cameron, Ms. Mary Anne Bryant, and Ms. Melissa Eadie. We are grateful to the staff and setting of Richmond Hill Retreat Center, Church Hill, for daily support and nurture. We appreciate the presence and remarks of all who made presentations to us on the ministries of the Diocese, the Virginia Theological Seminary and Centre for Anglican Communion Studies. We greatly enjoyed the lecture presented by the Rev Dr Robert Heaney of the Center for Anglican Communion Studies at VTS, entitled "Toward an Anglican Critical and Constructive Missiology".

Thank you to all who made this consultation possible through financial and material donations, including the dioceses of Colorado, Niagara, Ontario, Ottawa, Toronto, Virginia, The Anglican Church of Canada, The Episcopal Church, The Parish of Trinity Wall Street, and the Fellowship of the Maple Leaf. We are grateful to the work of Canon Dr. Isaac Kawuki Mukasa, Consultation Coordinator, and colleagues Dr. Andrea Mann, Ms. Claudia Alvarez and the Rev’d Ranjit Matthews.

In closing, and with humility, we invite all who read this Testimony to be servant leaders in healing and reconciliation where they encounter despair, pain, conflict, or brokenness in the Church and in the world. Take up one another’s burdens in the spirit of the radical hospitality Christ offers to everyone.

We complete our testimony with a beautiful Swahili salutation, borrowed from the East Africa Revival Fellowship, wishing you strengthened faith, renewed hope and especially the love of Christ,

Your *Ndugu wa Mzigo (Brothers and Sisters of the Burden)*,

The Rt. Rev’d Johannes Angela, Diocese of Bondo, Kenya

The Rt. Rev’d Michael Bird, Diocese of Niagara, Canada

The Rt. Rev’d John Chapman, Diocese of Ottawa, Canada

The Rt. Rev’d Garth Counsell, Diocese of Cape Town, South Africa

The Rt. Rev’d Michael Ingham, Diocese of New Westminster (retired), Canada

The Most Rev’d Colin Johnson, Dioceses of Toronto and Moosonee & Metropolitan of Ontario, Canada

The Rt. Rev’d Shannon Johnston, Diocese of Virginia, USA

The Rt. Rev’d Julius Kalu, Diocese of Mombasa, Kenya

The Rt. Rev'd Sixbert Macumi, Diocese of Buye, Burundi
The Rt. Rev'd Michael Oulton, Diocese of Ontario, Canada
The Most Rev'd Daniel Sarfo, Primate of the Province of West Africa, Ghana
The Rt. Rev'd Kobina Ben Smith, Diocese of Mampong, Ghana
The Rt. Rev'd Mensah Torto, Diocese of Accra, Ghana
The Rt. Rev'd Joseph Wasonga, Diocese of Maseno West, Kenya
The Rt. Rev'd Joel Waweru, Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya