

The Ninth Consultation
of
Anglican Bishops in Dialogue
London, Ontario, Canada
July 18---22, 2018

A Testimony of Constancy in Faith, Hope and Love

The Perspective of Elders

Your older ones shall dream dreams (Joel 2:28)

We began this Ninth Consultation, as we have begun each one, by sharing our names and our news. As we did so some themes began to emerge. A number of us were retiring from our Dioceses, or indeed had already retired. And a number of us had become grandparents, or had been blessed by the arrival of yet more grandchildren.

Many of the bishops in our Consultation are young, with years of ministry ahead. But as we give testimony to the Communion we also speak as elders, and as grandparents in God. And from this perspective we want to commend to the Communion the way of working we have developed over these years.

God has given us gifts of being. We are patient with one another. We take the trouble to come together and to give our full attention to one another. We prioritise praying together, and reading scripture. Above all we seek to listen before we speak.

These ways of being, slow and light and calm, are also the gifts of grandparents to their children and grandchildren. The Church, and especially the Church in the West, can all too easily become anxious and hasty. We want to solve our problems by cutting the knots that bind us and that are sometimes tightly tangled. From the perspective of elders, we counsel a different way. It is the way of slow and sustained growth in relationship and in mutual forbearance. It involves the building of long relationships, relationships that bear the fruit of patience and of constancy.

Walking in Constancy

...these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance. (Luke 8:15)

We write this testimony, then, from the experience of years. Our Consultations have grown as a tree grows. They began as a seedling begins: first small, hidden and unseen; then pushing through sometimes crusty soil to reach the light, establishing roots and a strong central direction. So that now, after nine years, we are aware that God has developed some fruit in us – the fruit which as the scripture says comes “with patient endurance”, in other words with constancy, with bearing one another

company and one another's burdens, as together we have made "a long obedience in the same direction".

This constancy is demanding, and we have felt its demands. Constancy demands the offering of life and the bearing of discomfort – physically in the demands of travel and time given to these meetings and to one another; and sometimes spiritually in bearing the pain of misunderstanding and opposition. There has also been discomfort in the room, as we have shared our differences honestly and truly, and have learned to see the person behind and beyond the opinions. We have all met these demands gladly, with our eyes on the prize of the unity that our Lord promises us. Constancy is walking together and learning together how to be Christians, learning together how to witness to the God who calls each and all of us to be one.

It has never been the purpose of our group to solve the problems of the Anglican Communion. Rather, we set out to dissolve misunderstandings, and to soften hearts, our own first of all. As we have done so we have come to see one another more fully – as bishops leading our people in radically different contexts, but leading our people in the same direction in response to what God is doing in God's world, seeking to conform ourselves to the likeness of our one Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the one Spirit.

We have shared the challenges of our ministry, as we have learned from one another what it is to be a bishop in a place. The places from which we come are profoundly different, but the task of leading God's people is at heart the same. This is why we have been able to relate to one another so profoundly, and to live and laugh together so readily and joyously.

We are simply Anglican pilgrims walking together, as an example from our earlier life brought home most powerfully. Having travelled as a group to a nearby community in Dar es Salaam beset with deep poverty, and walking the lanes of that place, we were approached by a woman pleading for prayers for someone in her home. All of us entered and together laid hands upon and prayed for the person in bed who was close to death. *This was a sacramental moment. God spoke with us "I'm glad you've had a chance to talk with one another but I'm deeply grateful you've prayed for this man and his family".*

We are simply Anglican pilgrims healing together, as we have heard in one another's stories. *I was that person in Matthew who received Jesus' healing. I have begun from this gathering to heal. It never occurred to me there were people of different orientations in my church until I met them face to face, and saw them as children of God, all of us in need of healing. The decision by some to leave the Church is what divides us, not different orientations. God loves without discrimination. I still believe in scripture as the inspired word of God and it is my responsibility as a bishop to minister to all equally.*

We are simply Anglican pilgrims testifying together, *with enormous gratitude, for the faithfulness of God and the many ways our lives, stories and ministries have crossed paths. So much sharing in direct conversation, respectful of context, has been a huge encouragement. It has renewed hope.*

This is a loving and generous community. Being here has enlarged my listening heart and acceptance of others, not with tolerance but love. What's next? The Communion connected and united in grace and hope. Some would say 'impossible', but we testify for this, we testify to this.

We are beginning to reflect upon our process of intercultural dialogue, and preparing to offer our testimony to the Lambeth Conference 2020. We commit to meet again in 2019 in Liverpool, England.

This Consultation's Context

...that God was reconciling himself to the world in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

The 9th Consultation met in London, Ontario, the city where the Anglican concept of 'mutual responsibility and interdependence' was drafted for the 1963 Anglican Congress of 1963. We acknowledge that the land on which we gathered is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron (Neutral), and Wendat peoples. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties.

The very journey to arrive in London became a metaphor of perseverance and constancy as members took up to four flights, negotiated missed communications and connections, and endured visa issues, misdirected luggage, and jetlag.

These challenges faded as we gathered for worship and to hear stories of the fruit that has emerged from the previous eight consultations in the lives of the elders of the dialogue. Listening to the testimonies of bishops brought joy and delight to our hearts. We were strengthened in our desire to share these fruit with others in the Anglican Communion as we all approach the Anglican Consultative Council 17 in 2019 and 2020 Lambeth Conference.

In light of the 2020 Lambeth theme *God's Church for God's World*, The Rev. Canon Dr. Todd Townshend drew us to reflect on God's purposes – God's new creation --- in mission, and on the ends of words in Christian life today. Dr. Townshend's speaking notes are appended to the Testimony for further reflection.

Dr. Townshend proposed that speaking and listening are in crisis at the moment, in the church and in the world. Words are in a state of chaos. The Christian narrative and how we share it through words, actions, silence, must lead to new revelations of God. We have the capacity for this through story---telling that keeps the Gospel message real and thick, life---giving and connected to the life and ministry of Jesus. The focus, the true end of words today is reconciliation, a core 'thesis statement' of the New Testament (2 Corinthians 5: 19). Reconciliation is the work of God, in us and through us, always painful, beautiful and particular, almost the nature of God and so impossible to know or fully describe.

We pondered what is it about this Consultation, or anything to do with the church, that helps us join God's yearning for reconciliation. Our Consultations have repeatedly learned about efforts toward reconciliation within local contexts. We have considered the legacies of racism, colonialism, and slavery. In this gathering, we listened to The Rev. Rosalyn Elm, young Anglican priest of the Oneida Nation speak about the legacies of European colonial settlement upon the land, waters, traditions and dignity of Canada's First Peoples. Her use of words and images, stories of enforced migration, lack, and landlessness continuing to this day were deeply moving. We were taught the wampum wisdom of The Dish with One Spoon Treaty binding all to share territory and protect the land, become reconciled with one another, with creation and the Creator. *The Church in Canada, despite having the Gospel, has taken a back seat, has been on the bad side of history. Really listening to one another, forgiveness and reconciliation is kingdom work. Take this strength within your circle and do something with it.*

Each Consultation lays down longer and deeper roots. The tree of our relationships fills out through the laughter and pain of stories shared. It produces new fruit to strengthen our joint commitment to the Gospel.

Archbishop Fred Hiltz inspired us with a passionate summation of the work of the Consultations and encouraged us to remain faithful to face to face dialogue and telling our stories of life and hope discovered together. He identified four different conversations within the Anglican Church of Canada, which could learn from the Consultation's commitment to and constancy in discussion between church leaders holding different views on Christian marriage.

Two new bishops to the Consultation spoke about the mission and ministry of their diocese. Bishop Paisible Ndacayisaba, Diocese of Muyinga, in the northern region of the Anglican Church of Burundi, leads a young diocese of 23 parishes, 35 pastors, 109 catechists and 35,000 church members. Muyinga Diocese's mission is to proclaim and share the Word of God, strengthen local communities, and plead for justice. Evangelization is the foundation upon which other mission develops, including youth development, welcome and integration of people living with disabilities, Mother's Union, assistance to orphans, HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB programs. After many years of civil war and a changing climate, the diocese, with the support of partners, especially the companion diocese of Qu'Appelle, is building a health centre, promoting tree planting, sponsoring an interethnic soccer team, and building wells for potable water.

Archbishop Melissa Skelton, Metropolitan, Province of British Columbia and Yukon, is Bishop of the Diocese of New Westminster. The diocese is small in geography on the ancestral territories of 40 First Nations, comprised of 66 parishes and 3 worshipping communities in the Vancouver BC metropolitan area, the Fraser Valley and the Sunshine Coast. The diocese's priorities are fostering relationships with one another and with neighbours, parish development, nurturing relationships with and learning about Indigenous peoples as well as advancing the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, engaging the diversity of peoples in parishes and in leadership, working on financial sustainability, and fostering a culture of transparency, collaboration, courage and choice. Specific initiatives include the School for Parish Development, a revamped process of discernment for Holy Orders, greater emphasis on the Synod Office and Committees serving the needs of parishes, property development, and a companion diocese relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Philippines

Thank you!

We are grateful for the invitation and hospitality of Bishop Linda Nicholls and people of the Diocese of Huron, including The Rev. Canon Dr. Todd Townshend and Huron College.

We are grateful to the Rev. Mike DeKay for his prayerful leadership of our daily worship, and to Mr. Angus Sinclair for music and song. We rejoiced in experiencing Morning Prayer in Zion Church, Oneida Settlement, and in joining the community of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, for Sunday Eucharist.

We are grateful to the staff of the Ivey Spencer Leadership Centre for daily food, meeting operations, and a quiet room for rest.

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Bishop Paul Bayes, Church of England

Bishop Michael Bird, Anglican Church of Canada

Bishop John Chapman, Anglican Church of Canada

Bishop Dickson Chilongani, Anglican Church of Tanzania

Bishop Garth Counsell, Church of the Province of Southern Africa

Bishop Given Gaula, Anglican Church of Tanzania

Bishop Michael Ingham (Retired), Anglican Church of Canada

Bishop Julius Kalu (Retired), Anglican Church of Kenya

Bishop Ed Konieczny, The Episcopal Church

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