

The Fifth Consultation  
of  
Anglican Bishops in Dialogue

Coventry, England  
May 22-25, 2014

A Testimony of Our Journey toward Reconciliation

*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 fifth Consultation of Anglican Bishops in Dialogue took place in the City of Coventry, England from 22 May through 25 May 2014. Our meeting followed our commitment in Cape Town, South Africa in May of 2013 to consider Christ's ministry of reconciliation in the world, the entrusting of that ministry to us, and the implications of that for our lives and ministries, especially with regard to the life of the Anglican Communion.

The Consultation is a group of Anglican bishops, grassroots in origin, committed to walking together as ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). We come from both Africa and North America, multiple countries and multiple provinces. We have come together willing to continue conversations begun at the Lambeth Conference of 2008. This consultation is expressive of our commitment to sharing a journey, a journey toward reconciliation, a journey into God's intended future for humankind and all of the creation. The Consultation has met previously in London (2010), Dar es Salaam (2011), Toronto (2012), and Cape Town (2013). Previous testimonies may be found at <http://www.anglican.ca/relationships/programs/global-relations/bishopsconsultation> .

We came to Coventry at the invitation of Canon David Porter, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Director of Reconciliation, to meet in part at Coventry Cathedral, which is recognized internationally as a centre for the ministry of reconciliation. We are grateful for Canon Porter's invitation. We were especially blessed to have the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend and Right Honorable Justin Welby, with us for a day of prayer, teaching, and conversation. Our time with Archbishop Justin had a profound impact on each of us and was an important influence in our subsequent deliberations.

In addition to the Archbishop's presentation on Reconciliation in the Anglican Communion, we heard presentations on the Ministry of Reconciliation in Coventry (Canon Porter), the Anglican Church of Kenya's role in Kenya's reconciliation effort (Bishops Waweru and Kalu), Reconciliation in the Communion—An African Perspective (Archbishop Idowu-Fearon), and Reconciliation in the Communion—A North American Perspective (Archbishop Johnson). During our time together, we upheld and prayed for South Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria,

Syria, and other areas of the world experiencing conflicts. As always, the conversations and fellowship among ourselves provided room for the Holy Spirit to work among us.

We are grateful to many for making this rewarding time together possible and those who enriched us by their presence and hospitality. We are grateful to Dr. Andrea Mann, the Rev. Canon Dr. Isaac Kawuki Mukasa, and Ms. Claudia Alvarez-Vega Munoz of the Anglican Church of Canada's Global Relations staff for providing logistical support. We thank the Archbishop of Canterbury for his time with us amidst a very demanding schedule. We thank Canon David Porter for journeying with us and facilitating our time in Coventry. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Bishop and Mrs. Cocksworth of Coventry for a warm welcome and supper in their home, for the unfailing help of the Dean, Chapter, and staff of Coventry Cathedral, especially for welcoming us as participants in Sunday's Eucharist, and the staff of St. Michael's House who provided generous support in so many ways. Finally, we express deep appreciation to those who made the event possible financially, particularly the Dioceses of Toronto, Niagara, and Ottawa, The Anglican Church of Canada, Trinity Church Wall Street, The Episcopal Church, and Fellowship of the Maple Leaf.

We now realize our decision to gather in the precincts of St. Michael's Cathedral in Coventry was providential. Our consultation began by praying the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation, which takes place each Friday at noon, within the medieval walls of the Cathedral destroyed in the midst of war on the night of 14 November 1940. Our consultation concluded in a celebration of the Holy Eucharist in the modern Cathedral on the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of its consecration to the Glory of God. In our worship we were drawn mysteriously into the risen life of Christ in Glory, which is the image of the tapestry hung on the Cathedral's East Wall and which dominates the entire experience of visiting the Cathedral.

The tapestry held for us a clue to the journey on which we have been embarked over these years together. The hands of Christ are raised in a manner that at first seems to invoke a blessing. Upon closer examination, however, the hands are not blessing but are instead holding a glass that faintly hides the face of Christ leaving it somewhat less bright than the greens of the tapestry's background. It is a brilliant artistic expression of what we all know to be spiritually true. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face." (1 Cor. 13:12a)

There is a third part of the Cathedral's architectural design. The ruins of the pre-war Cathedral are joined to the post-war structure by an expansive porch. To enter the sanctuary from the ruins requires that one cross the porch, beside which stands a massive statue of St. Michael in triumph over a chained and defeated Satan, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). We came to realize that the reconciliation we seek, in which Satan is defeated and deception succumbs to truth, is not something to be accomplished by us but is rather something already accomplished by God and in which we learn to participate over time. In this, we are each other's teachers, none of us seeing in any way now but through a glass dimly. Reconciliation is a journey from the ruins of war to the eschatological glory to which we are headed but at which we have not yet arrived. Reconciliation is eschatological, by which we mean it is God's ultimate dream for the creation, the direction in which creation is unavoidably moving, and the destination at which it will ultimately arrive in God's time. For now, though, we see but dimly.

To be a pilgrim at Coventry Cathedral is to move unavoidably and purposefully from old to new across the porch, the middle ground between what was and what is coming, crossing from what was to what will be, to hear the words of Christ in Glory, “See, I am making all things new.” (Rev. 21:5) It is in this middle ground between what was and what will be that all Christians stand, but it is the particular vocation of Anglicans to stand in the middle, to be the incarnate people of reconciliation.

God has well-supplied us with gifts necessary to answer our call to be people of reconciliation. In spite of many failures to live this out, reconciliation remains foundational to our identity and experience from our earliest days. We have come to see the challenges of our present life as being less a failure of our life together than an opportunity to live out the truth of what we have been called to be.

We strive to be bridge builders, understanding that Anglicanism has an eschatological vocation that is urgent, irrevocable, and irreplaceable, which is part of God’s design for the wellbeing of the world. We ask forgiveness for our failures, past and present, and as a sign of our repentance, we recommit ourselves to our foundational call as reconcilers.

It takes courage to continue in the journey when the way is difficult and the path ahead uncertain. The knowledge that perfect love casts out fear fills us with determination to persevere. Part of our journey, although we have only come to realize it in retrospect, has been through the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians. For not only have we been reminded by the Cathedral tapestry that all of us now see only dimly and none, face to face, we have come to realize that the reconciliation we seek is far beyond agreeing to disagree. We must seek not only to tolerate but to understand. Again, we are inspired by Paul’s words about the dim glass. In God’s time, “I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1 Cor. 13:12b) If we are to know God fully, we believe we must do the hard work of knowing, and being fully known to, one another.

We testify first that we find ourselves to be brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. It seems an obvious point, but it has not always been taken for granted. Some have claimed otherwise. It is a deception.

We also testify to our love for one another as brothers and sisters within the family of God. We do not make this claim lightly. We are aware of its costs. Love requires, as Paul has also taught us, patience and kindness toward one another. It requires that none insist on his or her own way or be envious, boastful, arrogant, or rude, irritable or resentful, or rejoice in wrongdoing. Rather, we rejoice in the truth, which we seek together. We bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things. We know that love never ends. (1 Cor. 13:4-8)

Jesus said we will be known as his disciples by just one thing, that we love one another. (Jn. 13:35) The love we are called to have for one another gives expression to 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. It is that we love one another as God has first loved us.

We also testify to the following:

- We are family. The Anglican Communion is a family of churches. It is not a Church itself. There is much we have in common as Anglicans, which is evidenced in mutuality in mission, but we remain independent and diverse provinces.
- We are called to seek to understand our differences, resisting the urge to ignore or simplify them.
- We ought to listen deeply to one another, and learn about each other's contexts by meeting face to face in those contexts.
- Efforts toward reconciliation are informed by our cultural context. There are going to be mistakes, misunderstanding, and miscommunication despite our best intentions.
- Reconciliation is possible only among those willing to be reconciled.
- Reconciling leadership does not dominate. It seeks to be servant of all and not master of any. Its power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9) It seeks broad consensus and not uniformity. It is often time consuming and repetitive, it requires a capacity to live with difference, and it needs patience.

We commit to:

- Being a Eucharistic community, invoking the Holy Spirit by gathering together as diverse people to be strengthened by prayer, word and sacrament in order to go into the world to witness to the reconciling love and power of God.
- Taking our testimony to the places from which we've come for reflection, discussion, and action.
- Praying for each other.
- Commending the fellowship of the Community of the Cross of Nails as a visible commitment to the ministry of reconciliation.
- Learning more about each other's contexts.
- Taking our conversations deeper and wider using the biblical and theological resources at our disposal.
- Sharing the journey on which we have embarked with others with whom we work and commending work toward reconciliation as we have experienced it.
- Encouraging conversations like this one among others.
- Challenging and correcting misinformation.
- Deepening our understanding of the cultural influences on the theology that underpins reconciliation.
- Reaching out to others in the effort of reconciliation even when others do not respond.
- Challenging each other to a deeper life of faithfulness and discipleship.
- Meeting again.

We leave Coventry knowing the work of reconciliation is not yet fully accomplished in our lives even while it is accomplished finally in the death and resurrection of Christ. Still, we take hope that this great work, to which Christ committed his own life, is now ours. It is no small thing. It is a journey of the spirit. It is a journey long and difficult. We do not anticipate arriving at its destination until we no longer see through a mirror dimly but behold God, and ourselves, face to face in eternity.

We were struck by Archbishop Justin's own request for prayer. Pray, he said, for the wisdom to know the right way toward reconciliation, for the patience to know when to act, and for courage to act. Finally, we testify to our intention to pray for Archbishop Justin as well as the Anglican Communion, especially for wisdom, patience, and courage. We commit ourselves to each other's prayers, and yours, as well. Pray, we ask, for wisdom, patience, and courage.

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20*

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The Rt. Rev'd Jane Alexander—Diocese of Edmonton, Canada  
The Rt. Rev'd Johannes Angela—Diocese of Bondo, Kenya  
The Rt. Rev'd Michael Bird—Diocese of Niagara, Canada  
The Most Rev'd Albert Chama—Primate of the Province of Central Africa, Zambia  
The Rt. Rev'd John Chapman—Diocese of Ottawa Canada  
The Most Rev'd Jacob Chimeledya—Primate of the Province of Tanzania, Tanzania  
The Rt. Rev'd Garth Counsell—Diocese of Cape Town, South Africa  
The Most Rev'd Josiah Idowu-Fearon—Diocese of Kaduna, Nigeria  
The Rt. Rev'd Michael Ingham—Diocese of New Westminster (retired), Canada  
The Most Rev'd Colin Johnson –Dioceses of Toronto and of Moosonee & Metropolitan of Ontario, Canada  
The Rt. Rev'd Julius Kalu—Diocese of Mombasa, Kenya  
The Rt. Rev'd Evans Mukasa Kisekka—Diocese of Luwero, Uganda  
The Rt. Rev'd Cyril Kobina Ben Smith—Diocese of Mampong, Ghana  
The Rt. Rev'd Mark MacDonald—National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Canada  
The Rt. Rev'd Sixbert Macumi—Diocese of Buye, Burundi  
The Most Rev'd Bernard Ntahoturi—Primate of the Province of Burundi, Burundi  
The Rt. Rev'd Robert O'Neill—Diocese of Colorado, USA  
The Rt. Rev'd Michael Oulton—Diocese of Ontario, Canada  
The Rt. Rev'd Anthony Poggo—Diocese of Kajo Keji, South Sudan  
The Most Rev'd Daniel Sarfo—Primate of the Province of West Africa, Ghana  
The Rt. Rev'd Stacy Sauls—Chief Operating Officer, The Episcopal Church  
The Rt. Rev'd Mensha 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

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