

ANGLICAN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT MEETING
JANUARY 15TH -16TH
LAMBETH PALACE – LONDON

The Five Marks of Mission clearly state that the Anglican Communion's role in addressing issues of poverty, justice and care for the environment, as integral to God's mission.

Five Marks of Mission

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

During the Lambeth Conference in July and August of 2008, these issues featured prominently in the general discourse of the conference and explicitly in the indaba groups on the 23rd July, where Bishops looked at the question of *Transforming Society – the bishop and social justice*. There was great enthusiasm amongst bishops and their wives for discussing the church's role in addressing the needs of the poor and marginalised in society, as participants shared stories of the daily work their dioceses and parishes engage in at local level, as well as the diverse range of experiences within the Communion of regional and international advocacy.

This enthusiasm and commitment “To respond to human need with loving service” and “To seek to transform unjust structures of society” was exemplified by the Walk of Witness, on 24th July, when over 1500 bishops and their spouses s marched through the centre of London, past the Houses of Parliament to stand with the UK Prime Minister to be a voice for the voiceless at the highest level. The UK Prime Minister called the event *‘one of the greatest public demonstrations of faith that this great city has ever seen.’* Certainly the ‘Walk of Witness’ encouraged all who participated to believe that when we stand together as a Communion to be a voice for the voiceless, we can become more than the sum of our parts, and that people will listen.

The walk also clearly illustrated to those outside the Church the rich diversity of cultures and experiences of development we hold within the countries that are part of the Anglican Communion. As the third largest Christian grouping in the world, with structures that reach from the most remote village to the highest echelons of government, we have much to bring to the world of advocacy, relief and development, and are afforded great opportunity to speak.

The Lambeth Conference Reflections document sought to record something of the enthusiasm and aspirations of the Conference in this area, under Section C of Human and Social Justice. There was a clear desire not merely to talk, but to encourage action, and specifically to encourage better and more effective collaboration around existing relief and development activities within the Communion. One suggestion was the formation of an Anglican Relief and Development Agency.

After the Lambeth Conference Archbishop Rowan Williams and the Anglican Communion Office, have worked together to take forward many of the recommendations from the Reflections document. As part of this process and at the invitation of the Archbishop Of Canterbury, The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Rowan Williams, a select group of individuals working the field of social development and community outreach, met at Lambeth Palace on the 15 and 16 January 2009. The individuals, were chosen because of their extensive experienced in relief and development, and all work within provinces and organisations within the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss:

- The recommendation made by the bishops of the Lambeth conference and propose ways to take this recommendation forward;
- To engage in dialogue about how best the Anglican Communion may embark on a collaborative approach to existing Anglican relief, development and advocacy activities;
- To deliberate about the possibilities for joint action within the Anglican Communion as it relates to social development and mission.

The consultation sought to build on existing successful models of practice and partnership and to draw out the energy and enthusiasm from the local church, while also working to develop a model that is workable for our Anglican Communion.

The group reached consensus on two key issues:

- A theological vision: The need to define and communicate an Anglican theological basis of understanding and practice of development that roots development work firmly within God's mission as understood in the Anglican Communion. To communicate this theology of development throughout the Communion, from parish level to national and international structures.
- A strategic vision: To create an Anglican Alliance, in order to better coordinate and inform our development and advocacy work, and to share experiences of best practice. The Alliance would also serve to improve ownership of existing work throughout the global Anglican Communion and to improve visibility and communication of these activities, both within the Communion and to the wider world.

Next steps:

- To create a Foundational Document for an Anglican Alliance, which outlines how we plan to work more collaboratively together, with the expectation of a draft being presented to ACC-14 in May 2009.
- To plan for the development of a theological document, seeking to draw in a diverse range of resources on mission and development from across the Communion.

The group also outlined risks and realities for any future process:

- This group had not tried to represent all provinces or all stakeholders in the Communion, but rather it had been composed of development experts with a wealth of practical and professional experience.
- Therefore there also a need to draw in others who were not at the meeting into the wider process, in order that we do not miss expertise from other regions and organisations that were absent from the meeting.
- The energy and enthusiasm of this group needs to be harnessed, by keeping momentum for this process, along with some consultation among other stakeholders.
- It is crucial that the work evolving from this meeting begins to inform and engage with the Instruments of Communion (Archbishop of Canterbury, Primates, ACC), while establishing legitimacy to continue to take forward the development of the theological document and strategic alliance.
- A great strength of this consultation was its ability to draw from the parish, diocesan, provincial, regional and international experiences, and any resultant process must continue to draw expertise from all these forums, both for equity and for sustainability.

This meeting was incredibly successful and the group carried out the challenging task set before it with a high degree of expertise and commitment. That people from such diverse cultures and organisational structures could reach a consensus is a testament to their commitment to a vision for the Communion, and to the challenge of realising this vision in a truly collaborative and sustainable way. The hard work of realising this vision now begins and it will require continued commitment from all involved. Only by establishing a sustainable and equitable process will we hope to engage with the current challenges we face as a Communion, in the area of relief and development, as an integral part of God's mission.

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