



# ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

24 July 2008

## LAMBETH CONFERENCE WALK OF WITNESS, 2008

At the conclusion of this historic walk of witness in which the bishops of the Anglican Communion have been joined by other faith leaders from across the world, we are united in our determination to support the leaders of the world to keep their promise to halve extreme poverty through the Millennium Development Goals framework by 2015. In 2005 in Ireland, and again in 2007 in South Africa, the Anglican Communion collectively committed itself to be ready partners in meeting the goals, with their clear and time bound targets to halve extreme poverty. Regrettably, despite some important progress in some regions and nations, these goals will not be met for millions of people for whom we have pastoral care.

In our human family the continuing consequence of failure is the death of millions of women and children from child-birth and preventable childhood diseases. Millions more have hopes for sustainable life diminished because of poverty-fuelled conflict, lack of education and gender inequality, all of which undermine a new generation's liberation from HIV. We add to this now our growing understanding of the poverty and vulnerability created by climate change and the structural injustice in global trade and economics.

The commitment and progress of the international community to the MDGs thus far is to be commended. The consistent global leadership of the UK government towards meeting these targets is particularly welcome. But Christian pastors and other faith leaders cannot stand by while promises are not kept, when nations are tempted by the easier path of preserving their own wealth at the cost of other people's poverty.

God's message of reconciliation calls us to action. Indeed our faith calls us to go beyond the conservative targets set by the Millennium Development Goals merely to halve extreme poverty. We know that the aspirations of the poor and marginalised are inseparable from our own personal or national fulfilment. **The goal of our faith is that all may have life and have it in its fullness.**

For many years the Anglican Communion, alongside other faith communities, has been active in fighting against poverty and injustice. Our struggle is seen not only through prayer and advocacy, but also by directly serving many of the most marginalised people in our world through the daily provision of education, health care, emergency relief and counselling. In this we are among those who build and bear hope for life when hope might otherwise be lost in cycles of violence, drought and disaster. We pay tribute to the inspiring

lives lived by countless people as they seek to know and love God amidst the cruelties of poverty and the burdens that women bear disproportionately.

Because our faith challenges us to eradicate poverty, and not merely to reduce it, we should be all the more alarmed that with the half way mark to 2015 passed, it is clear that most of these achievable targets will not be met. The cause is not a lack of resources, but a lack of global political will.

**When they meet in New York at the United Nations on 25<sup>th</sup> September, world leaders must find greater political commitment to addressing poverty and inequality. A timetable for achieving the MDGs by 2015 needs to be created. Our leaders need to invest in and strengthen their partnership with the Church worldwide, so that its extensive delivery network for education and health care, alongside other faiths, is fully utilised in the eradication of extreme poverty.**

**Even if delivered, the Millennium Development Goals risk being undermined: climate change is already hitting the poorest hardest, and so we urge leaders to commit to ambitious cuts in carbon emissions, appropriate to the size of their economy and historic responsibility.**

We call on leaders to meet their targets for spending on development and implementation of national action plans. We believe that failing to do so amounts to bearing false witness not only to our neighbours, but to ourselves and to our God. May his kingdom of justice come, and his will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

By joining us at the end of this walk of witness you will have heard our plea. In receiving these calls from us we hope you also receive the encouragement of the millions of people whom we represent from over 75 countries. We pray that you will continue to drive ahead the concerns we share for the justice and peace in our world which alone is the basis for all human flourishing and commonwealth.