

Communications

“In the beginning was the communication¹ and communication was with God and Communication was God. Communication was with God in the beginning. Through communication all things were made; without communication nothing was made that has been made. In Communication was life, and that life was the light of human beings” (John 1:1-5).

Speaking to a new world

Jesus Christ has called every member of our Anglican Communion to share with others the most exciting and important Good News of all time. Therefore, communicating is at the very heart of our identity and calling as Christians.

In the past, our ability to share this message of reconciliation and salvation was limited to our immediate family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. But we now live in a digital age where there is widespread access to mobile phones² or the Internet (or both in the same device) so that our circle of influence is limitless – beyond geography, class, and even language.

This Information Age of ours has even amplified the impact of more traditional media; it has facilitated cheaper, faster printing, and allowed the ‘man in the street’ to publish news, and create and broadcast radio and television that can be consumed by millions around the world. Media has become social. Journalism is now done by citizens.

Sadly, our Anglican Communion has not fully grasped what an historic opportunity this is for its (marks of) mission, or for strengthening and developing its bonds of affection. Strategic communication techniques and skills, and the sheer power of digital networking, are rarely taught in our seminaries and theological colleges. Too few Provinces and dioceses don’t employ paid, qualified communicators. Too few individual churches proactively include strategic communications as part of their day-to-day life and work.

One major reason for all this is that there has never been any serious attempt by the Anglican Communion to consider what part communication plays in the theological and ecclesiological life of our faith tradition. Another is that ‘communication’ has been traditionally considered a *support function* rather than an essential component of all we do as a Church. What’s more, many church workers, both lay and ordained, respond to strategic communications—particularly media relations and Social Media—with an unhelpful flight, fright or fight response.

For these reasons our Church remains stuck in a decades-old paradigm of communications in which churches restrict their main communication channels to Sunday morning sermons, newsletters and episcopal pronouncements, rather than speaking to key audiences through channels (and networks) that they actually use³. This, despite several previous

¹ “The word ‘Logos’ is translated as communication. Communication is more than a ‘word’ (either written or spoken). Communication is the essence of God’s very being that is revealed to us through Christ. So the word communication means to share something in common. It cannot be identified merely as information nor as media related activities only. Communication is the essence of all beings.” – *Participating in God’s Communication*, Anglican Communion Communications Working Group.

² According to the World Bank’s World Development Indicators, 60.84 percent of the world’s total population had a mobile phone subscription in 2008. According to the UN: “Mobile subscriptions in Africa rose from 54 million to almost 3500 million between 2003 and 2008, the quickest growth in the world”

³ E.g. the secular media; Social Media such as Flickr, Facebook; etc.

ACC/Lambeth Conference resolutions urging the churches of the Communion to make communications a fundamental part of their mission⁴ by speaking in(to) the modern 'marketplace' where the general public holds its conversations.

Keeping to the old paradigm means, at best, the Church will continue to promote the Kingdom of God through its immediate circles of influence only. At worst, the most important message we have to offer the world, that of the Good News of Christ, will be drowned out by an increasingly anti-Christian world that better understands the power of effective communications.

Addressing these challenges

In 2011 the Standing Committee resolved that an Anglican Communion Communications Working Group (ACCWG) be formed to review communications across the Communion, to celebrate best practice, and to consider the implications of rise and spread of digital technology for the life and work of the Anglican Communion. Prior to meeting in March 2012, the ACCWG⁵ carried out an informal survey of communications capacity across the Anglican Communion. This revealed that of the 33 Provinces (and 3 dioceses) that responded:

- 71% didn't have paid communications staff. 37% considered the (often overburdened) Provincial Secretary their main communicator, compared with just 29% who had a paid employee(s) to oversee communications.
- Only 9% of responding Provinces issued news or information *more than once a month*.
- The vast majority of Provinces had little or no communications training available for clergy or laity.

These results plus strategic thinking at the March meeting resulted in the following conclusions:

1. That the structure and capacity of the Communion to communicate needs to be strengthened to allow it to communicate effectively to itself and others;
2. That there is a significant gap in the knowledge of the role of, and skills associated with, strategic communication across the Anglican Communion. Therefore, work needs to be

⁴ These include:

- **Lambeth Conference – 1958, Resolution 62 - Progress in the Anglican Communion Missionary Appeal.** "The Conference urges that every opportunity be taken, at the local and provincial level, to make effective use of such channels of communication as television, radio, films, religious drama, and the secular and religious press...";
- **Anglican Consultative Council 6 – 1984 - Resolution 53: Communications** "Resolved that this Council, recognizing that deliberate and planned communication is essential for the building up of the community of the Church and is vital in assisting the witness of that community in telling the good news and discerning and interpreting the signs of the times..."
- **Anglican Consultative Council - ACC-7, Singapore, 1987 - Resolution 21: Media.** "THAT this Council: a. Gives thanks to God for all the benefits provided to life by modern means of communication; b. Urges member Churches to make effective use of such media in teaching, evangelism and communication...)

⁵ Members are from England, the Episcopal Church, Hong Kong, the Episcopal Church of Sudan, Mexico, India & Southern Africa

done to raise the level of understanding of, and training in, communications as a ministry to a minimum standard and beyond;

3. That too few Anglicans know they are part of the Anglican Communion and/or identify themselves as a twin citizen (with local *and* global identities and loyalties), and that communications work should be done to rectify this.

The full summary report can be found can be found in Appendix I. Key proposals by the group include:

- An Anglican Theology of Communications document should be produced;
- Every Province should appoint a qualified, experienced Communications Director who also acts as part of a cross-Communion communications network;
- Basic training in communication skills (plus continuing professional development) should be available for all Communion communicators;
- A full audit of communications capacity across each Province should be carried out to identify challenges and also best practice;
- Resources should be provided to allow churches everywhere to celebrate Anglican Communion Sunday;
- The Anglican Communion Office's ability to support the Communion should be strengthened, through a better website, the relaunch of *Anglican World* magazine and the appointment of more staff.

It was agreed that these needed to be phased over time. The following tasks are, however, already underway or completed:

- An Anglican Theology of Communications has been produced (See Appendix II);
- The production of *Anglican World* magazine has been relaunched;
- A new Anglican Communion website and a new Anglican Communion News website are currently under construction;
- An agreement has been reached with the Anglican Health Network to provide materials for Anglican Communion Sunday;
- An agreement has been reached with the Church of England to share the contents of its training website for new diocesan communicators with Anglican Communion communicators;
- An ACO communications officer for Africa who will also support the Church of the Province of Central Africa has been hired in Zambia on a three-year contract

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Anglican Communion Communications Working Group

Members: John Allen (Southern Africa), Nick Clarke (England), Joey Fan (Hong Kong), Linda Hanick (Episcopal Church) Bp Anthony Poggo (Sudan), the Revd John Joshva Raja (India), Emily Shepherd (England), Evangelina Zarco-Osnaya (Mexico).

The Working Group met between 13-15 March, 2012 to review the results of the informal Communications survey, to celebrate effective communications, and to consider what steps the Communion could take to strengthen its Provincial and global communications.

Recommendations by the Working Group included the following:

Structure and Capacity – *the ability of the Anglican Communion to communicate to itself and others will be strengthened through the following:*

1. Every Province should be encouraged to appoint at least one paid, qualified **Communications Director**⁶ who also has an **advisory group** from across the Province (that includes members with IT skills and knowledge) to support his/her ministry and work with them to prepare a Provincial **communications plan** as part of the Provincial Strategy
 - a. Each Communications Director should act as part of a **global communications network** across the Communion that shares that best news, information, resources and best practice with other network members. This Network should **meet in person** on a regular basis (at least every two to three years)
2. A full **audit** of current accessibility availability and affordability of communications channels should be carried out across the Anglican Communion with a view to filling the communications gaps in our Communion.
3. A full-time **Communications Manager** should be hired (or secondeed sourced from a Province for not less than eight months) to provide support to the Anglican Communion Office's Communications Department in implementing the recommendations of the Working Group and to support the ongoing work of the department.

Knowledge and Education - *The level of understanding of and training in communications as a ministry is raised to a minimum standard and beyond by the following:*

1. **Basic training in communications** should be available for all Communion communicators (and anyone else who needs it) in the most appropriate form, e.g. a module that's online, a printed pack, on CD, etc.
2. **All new bishops** should receive solid communications training and subsequent training at regular intervals.
3. **Continuing professional development** of existing communications staff should be encouraged by all Provinces. One model might be that of the Church of England that has

⁶ The term 'director' is meant to signify the seniority of this role within the Provincial structure

a website dedicated to supporting its diocesan communicators. It is also supporting the creation of a new postgraduate course on Theology and Communications at Chester University.

4. A **regular publication** (a journal?) produced on communications best practice and theory from across the Communion, and/or the production of a Communications Handbook detailing ethics of communications, best practice, recommended current technological tools and resources.
5. An **Anglican Theology of Communications** document should be produced to demonstrate the importance of communications in the life of our Church, especially in an age where everyone is increasingly connected.
6. A short rationale on embedding communications in **theological/ministerial training** should be produced.

Information and identification – *as many Anglicans know they are part of and identify themselves as a twin citizen of the Anglican Communion*

1. **Anglican Communion Sunday** should be proposed to the Anglican Consultative Council as an opportunity for churches around the world to celebrate the best of our global faith tradition once a year. Material such as sermon notes, prayers, PowerPoint presentation, etc. could be produced centrally and shared as required with the Provinces.
2. The **Anglican Communion website** should be strengthened in its role as a connector and resource of the Provinces, primarily through a rebuild. The majority of material posted on the site and the Anglican Communion News Service should be available in at **least two other languages**. Work should be done to discover how best such translators should be sourced.
3. **Anglican World magazine** should be re-launched as a print and digital edition

Appendix II

Participating in God's Communication

"In the beginning was the communicationⁱ and communication was with God and Communication was God. Communication was with God in the beginning. Through communication all things were made; without communication nothing was made that has been made. In Communication was life, and that life was the light of human beings" (John 1:1-5).

Communicating God

From the beginning, communication is from God. God communicates and so we communicate. Through communication, God creates this world; By communicating God gives life to all beings as he created all in his own image.

"God has created all men and women in his image, and he wishes all to enjoy that fullness of life in his presence which we know as salvationⁱⁱ."

Communication is also the way in which God makes God-self known to human beings and human beings respond to Godⁱⁱⁱ. God reveals God's self to human beings and establishes relationship with human beings. Human response is to communicate with God which means to have communion (*koinonia*) with God and to participate in God's communication to this world. In this sense communication is not merely the act of 'sending and receiving' messages through a medium but also 'participating, interacting, relating and sharing' in the on-going process of God's and people's communication.

God communicates with human beings

God communicates God's love by sending Jesus to this world^{iv}. God continues to communicate in spite of the human fall and sinfulness and thus God attempts to restore relationship with all human beings. Through such relationship and communication God redeems human beings from their sinfulness and affirms the fullness of life in all beings. God communicates through Jesus Christ and brings together the communion as a family with the work of the Holy Spirit^v. The triune God is a communicating God: communicating within and with all beings and inviting them into a loving and dialogical communion with God. In a recent Anglican-Orthodox theological dialogue the above statement is reiterated and affirmed as follows:

*"The fellowship or communion (*koinonia*) of life in the Church reflects the communion that is the divine life itself, the life of the Trinity. This is not the revelation of a reality remote from us, for in the communion of the Church we share in the divine life. The communion manifested in the life of the Church has the trinitarian fellowship as its basis, model and ultimate goal. Conversely, the communion of the Persons of the Holy Trinity creates, structures and expounds the mystery of the communion experienced in the Church. It is within and by the Church that we come to know the Trinity and by the Trinity we come to understand the Church because 'the Church is full of Trinity' (Origen, Fragment on Psalm 23.1, PG 12, 1265)^{vi}."*

God communicates to this world.

God's generous love is revealed in every act of God's communication to human beings. God communicates with all beings. The writer of Hebrews clearly states (1:1) that, in the past

God communicated to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days God has communicated to us by his son". God not only communicated in the past but also communicates now to human beings through various means and people at various times in order to invite human beings into a communion with God and thus redeem and restore the life in its fullness of all human beings. God's care and love for this world is communicated as imperative for all people to show the same love and respect to all beings. This was already stated in the Generous love document,

"God cares for each person with a parental love; called to be perfect as our Father is perfect, we know that we must show that same love and respect to all"^{vii}.

God participates in human communication.

Communication is the essence of our being, our identity and our faith. We, humans are communicating beings and thus God engages in human communication to relate and to reveal God's love, mercy and glory through God's creation, incarnation and other acts of revelation. God's communication demands the affirmative and just relationship between individuals and within communities. God participates in human communication process in order to interact with and relate to them. In this sense God participates in human communication regardless of the limitations of language, media and methods. God's communication is credible communication which calls us to unmask all pseudo-communication which divides rather than unites. God's participation in human communication is revealed in the life and words of Jesus. It also challenges all those communications that sows hatred, sustains war and through slander poisons interpersonal relationships^{viii}.

Jesus is God's Communication.

Jesus was God's media to this world. Jesus' communication with his audience reveals God's communicative love to human beings and thus affirms life-giving communication to all. Jesus communicated God's love in and through his life, words and action. In Jesus Christ, there is no distance or separation between the medium and the message^{ix}. Jesus Christ is God's communication in its clearest, costliest and most demanding^x. Jesus told parables, miracles and other deeds. He announced the good news about the reign of God. He taught the Great commandments to his disciples. He commanded the apostles to the Great Commission that is to communicate God's love, mercy and grace to all the people in the world. So, Jesus' communication refers to the acts of telling stories, announcing good news, sending disciples, serving the poor, healing the sick and liberating the oppressed. Christian communication should be an act of love which liberates all who take part in it^{xi}. We are called to communicate like Christ the truth which set us free. True and credible Communication is the need of the hour within and outside the Christian Community.

Jesus Christ the Son of God shows us 'the radiance of God's glory'. He opens for us the way to the Father and we wish others to walk that way with us; he teaches us the truth which sets us free, and we wish to commend that truth to others; he shares with us his risen life, and we wish to communicate that life to others^{xii}.

Early Christian followers (both apostles and others) communicated this good news to all people in spite of the persecution.

God communicates through Holy Spirit

Wherever the followers of Jesus went they realised the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst. Their communication was very effective means of relating to people and thus built communities that witness Christ to nations. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to communicate among ourselves and thus creates a common space where we share our common concerns and engage in conversation with each other while we may hold differences of opinions on issues. The importance of Pentecost is the descending of the Holy Spirit among the disciples and enabling them to speak in other tongues. It means the Holy Spirit enables the church to communicate across different cultures, languages, ideologies and theologies^{xiii}. In spite of all our differences and disagreements, the acts of communicating and relating become the main tasks of those who are filled by the power of the Holy Spirit^{xiv}. The presence of Holy Spirit takes the church to experience unpredictable events and leads us through unexpected places where God's mission can be different from ours.

God as Creator, Redeemer and Counsellor communicates to and through the church and thus inviting all to share life in God. This triune God is present in us and thus communicates in and through us to all beings. Within the triune God the oneness is communicated through mutuality and interactivity in spite of differences. Such a model of communication challenges the top-down models of communication within the churches and communities.

Church communicates

The Church is the medium of God's and people's communication. Communication is like blood that runs through the body of Christ and thus connects all of us within the Anglican communities and also relates to other Christians in witnessing to God's love in Christ together. The Church, being the followers of Christ, is called to communicate this Good News to all people, to love and serve the poor and people at the margins, to listen to all people from different traditions and religions and to share and respect the dignity of all beings in their communication and thus bring the reign of God in this world.

The Anglican Communion can be a heralding means, a sign or sacrament, a communion, a servant, shepherd and thus an effective communicator to her members and to others. It has a mandate to learn about, educate and practice good ways of communicating in order to follow Christ both in public and private and at interpersonal, group and mass levels. The Church needs to be humble in learning from others in order to communicate effectively in public and thus reveal God by witnessing to Christ in every possible ways.

The Church communicates via the Eucharist.

The celebration of the Eucharist is an act of communication that brings Christians together to commune and also invites us as partakers in sharing of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This also means that we are invited to communicate among ourselves and also together to communicate and thus commune with God. God invites people to participate in this divine community's communication. All are thus invited by Jesus to be part of this family and to be one in him through Eucharistic participation.

Communication builds community^{xv}. Church communicates and builds community. Communication supports and nourishes cultures and so the church communicates and nourishes culture. Communication is participatory which challenges churches to be participatory in their communication too. Communication is prophetic and so the church is called to be prophetic in her communication. Church is called to communicate credibly and prophetically so that unjust structures are transformed and God's reign is established. Churches are also called to communicate for peace and for the integrity of creation.

Eucharist enables the church to remember that we are called as people of God communicating to this world, God's love and care to all and thus inviting them to share in this loving and sharing community.

The church as the body of Christ challenges unethical ways and means of communication in this world. The church is also called to use all the available means and methods of communication to promote awareness about many human needs, for example HIV and AIDS, malaria and ecological issues that are challenging human lives today in many contexts. Eucharistic sharing remains an ideal for us to challenge ourselves and others in our practices of communication. The church should consider exploring the ways to communicate and relate to all people so that we can witness Christ today through our communicative life.

Communication is God's Mission

The writer in the fourth Gospel reminds us that we are in God and God is in us, particularly present in our communication of God's love in Christ^{xvi}. Our communication involves sharing, participating, proclaiming, teaching, listening and other activities of God's mission in order to redeem and restore relationship with God and to nourish relationship among human beings according to the great commandments of Jesus Christ. Such communicative mission is affirmed by Anglican Consultative Council in the Five Marks of Mission. These five marks of mission^{xvii} can be rewritten in terms of communication as follows:

- To communicate the Good News of God's reign to all people using all means, types, methods and approaches of communication which are available ('To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom')
- To establish a good communication and communion with new believers ('To teach, baptise and nurture new believers')
- To communicate towards people's need with development, participatory and decentred communication and thus serve people towards better humanity with love and care ('To respond to human need by loving service')
- To challenge existing unjust ways and means of communication and thus seek for alternative means and methods of communication in order to enable communities to share technology, media and communication tools in a fair and just way and thus promote life-affirming communication that advocates dignity of all people in society ('To seek to transform unjust structures of society')
- To communicate awareness, educational information and training for safeguarding the integrity of creation and thus sustain and renew the life of the earth using all means that are available ('To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth')

Thus the Anglican Theology of Communication can be summarized as:

A **theology of conversation and dialogue** among the members of the communion and with other Christian and non-Christian people of God;

A **theology of participation and interaction** where people recognise and respect each other's dignity and mutuality;

A **communitarian theology** where relationship and communication are on the basis of Christian love, compassion, human dignity and justice for all;

A **theology of via media** where common grounds are sought for holding the differences and sharing the common concerns together

The five marks of mission and theology of communication provides us with a mandate for recognising the role of communication in bringing us together across the Anglican Communion in our common witness and also in carrying out the mission of God as part of the Body of Christ in this world. Communication plays a major role in sharing and shaping our faith in Christ and also our worldviews, values and attitudes. Thus the churches are called to train their leaders in this field of communication not only to preach and share but also to listen, serve, love and challenge the communities locally and globally. This necessitates a proper training course in the field of communication among theological colleges where communication can be studied holistically, practically, theologically, creatively and reflectively. Such a Christian Communication will strengthen the Anglican Communion in enormous ways both in coming together, connecting with each other and also communicating among themselves and also with the others. This communication enhances life of the communion and nourishes her growth in witnessing faith together with all Christians.

ⁱ The word 'Logos' is translated as communication. Communication is more than a 'word' (either written or spoken). Communication is the essence of God's very being that is revealed to us through Christ. So the word communication means to share something in common. It can not be identified merely as information nor as media related activities only. Communication is the essence of all beings.

ⁱⁱ 1 Tim 2:4 – quoted from Generous Love – An Anglican Theology of Interfaith Relations, 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Upsala Report: The Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of World Council of Churches, Geneva: WCC 1968:394f.

^{iv} John 3:16.

^v Ephesians 2:22.

^{vi} The Church of Triune God, The Cyprus Agreed Statement concludes the third phase of the Anglican - Orthodox international theological dialogue, 2006
<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/pdf/The%20Church%20of%20the%20Triune%20God.pdf>

^{vii} Matthew 5:48, Generous Love, 2008: 1 - .the truth of the Gospel and the call to dialogue – An Anglican Theology of Interfaith Relations – A Report from Anglican Communion Network for Interfaith Concerns, http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents/generous_love_A4_with_foreward.pdf

^{viii} The Uppsala Report, WCC 1968: 396.

^{ix} McLuhan Reflections on religion: Medium and the light, 2010, p107.

^x Gathered for Life: Official Report of Sixth Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver: WCC 1983:104.

^{xi} Christians Principles of Communication, World Association for Christian Communication, London: WACC 1997:5. <http://waccglobal.org/en/about-wacc/principles.html>

^{xii} John 14:6 and Hebrew 1:3 -Generous Love 2008:1-2.

^{xiii} Acts 2:1-3.

^{xiv} Ephesians 2:19-21.

^{xv} Christian Principles of Communication according to World Association for Christian Communication, <http://waccglobal.org/en/about-wacc/principles.html>

^{xvi} John 17.

^{xvii} Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101.
<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>