

God's Church for God's World

Reflections on the Lambeth Conference 2022

Dr Murray Harvey, Bishop of Grafton

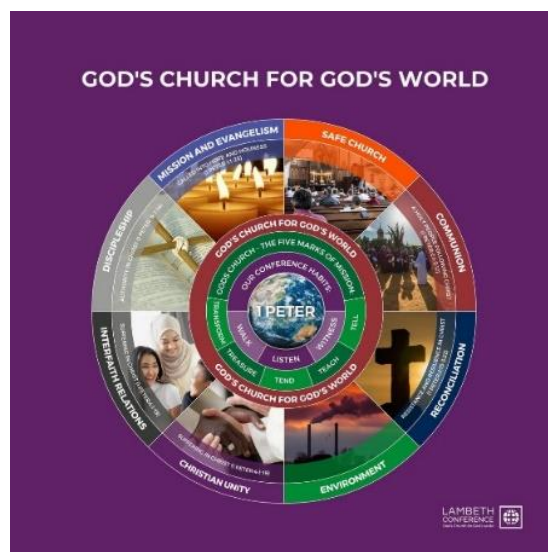


As I reflect on this important gathering in the life of our Communion and begin to share insights and learnings, I am conscious that the theme *God's Church for God's World* was an ambitious one. Yet by exploring and celebrating this theme the gathering equipped the bishops and spouses who attended from around the world to understand one another's contexts and to begin afresh to work together for our common good to the glory of God.

The conference went for two weeks and the amount of input, celebration and discussion was enormous. The worship was uplifting and was a mix of contemporary and traditional, reflecting the incredible diversity of worship traditions and music from around the globe. As one bishop commented, the Communion may finally have been freed from the Englishness of Anglicanism.

In many ways it will be quite some time before I digest and appreciate the full implications and learnings from Lambeth 2022. What I write here in terms of reflections and sharing of information will inevitably be an inadequate offering but I feel that it's important to make a start. I attended the conference together with my wife Leanne. She fully participated in the joint sessions and the spouses' conference. We plan to make a joint presentation at Diocesan Synod in 2023.

THEME



The Conference was designed to explore what it means for the Anglican Communion to respond to the needs of the world today. To help us understand our mission in the face of such a diverse and complex world, we explored the main theme through various subthemes including Mission and Evangelism, Safe Church, Communion, Reconciliation, Environment, Christian Unity, Interfaith Relations and Discipleship. We also explored our ongoing response to a

world changed by COVID-19. The Lambeth Conference program was built around a daily rhythm combining prayer, daily worship, Bible Expositions and Bible Study Groups, Plenary/Keynote addresses from the Archbishop of Canterbury and guest speakers and 'Lambeth Calls' discussions.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER



One of the great privileges of the conference was to participate in pre-conference (Zoom) Bible Study sessions for bishops and spouses which happened in 2020 and 2021. These studies continued at Canterbury in small groups. In my group (pictured above) there were bishops from The Congo, Sri Lanka, Kenya, the USA, Scotland, England and Australia. This gave a diverse perspective as we studied the scripture together every day. At one point we were studying 1 Peter 5:8-9 and addressing the question, "What are the roaring lions in your context? Who or what is threatening your flock?" While some of us spoke about secularism, the media and complacency as our threats, African bishops spoke about horrendous persecution from corrupt governments and the danger of violence from armed militia groups. A take away for me is that hope in the midst of persecution and suffering unites us not only with the Apostle Paul but also with Jesus himself. Leanne led Bible Study sessions for spouses so I know she will expand on this during her presentation. The Bible Study material from the Lambeth Bible Study sessions were used at Ministry School this year and clergy have the option of using this material in their ministry units.

LAMBETH CALLS



The Archbishop of Canterbury introduced the idea of Lambeth Calls. This is the gathered bishops calling to the whole communion on certain issues with the aim of strengthening each other with love and understanding rather than making *resolutions*, the status of which has been unclear. The Archbishop of Canterbury was at pains to point out that the Lambeth Conference is not a synod or legislative body and any statements or calls that are made by the assembled bishops are non-binding on member churches, provinces or dioceses. It is not possible to discuss all the Calls here. The final text of the Calls will be made widely available in the near future by the Anglican Communion Office. However, I address some below.

The Call on Human Dignity. In my view this Call began to articulate a theology of the human person that has been so much lacking in Anglican theology, leading to our current difficulties in discussing issues of human sexuality. In part, the Call states:

The scriptures witness to the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings because all are made in the image of God. In the great ethnic and cultural diversities of the Anglican Communion all are made in the image of God. All are equal. Indeed, it is God's intent to curate the richness of the world's cultures in the final and full revelation of God's glorious redemption (Rev. 21:24). Therefore, the bishops gathered at the Lambeth conference 2022 call on the Church to protect the dignity of all creation, cultures, and human beings.

The full text of the Call on Human Dignity, which amongst other things addressed the issue of same-sex relationships and human sexuality, attracted great interest prior to, and during, the Conference. We were reminded of the fact that in the vast majority of provinces of the Anglican Communion same-gender marriage is not permissible. For some of those from a Western, English speaking perspective, this may be hard to hear and accept, but it is one of the realities of belonging to a global Communion where the majority of members come from cultures that are quite traditional and even conservative when it comes to sexual relationships. As the Archbishop of Canterbury reminded us in a separate letter to the Communion at the time of the Conference, the Lambeth Conference does not and has not affirmed same-sex relationships, but is conscious of a variety of views and practices within the Anglican Communion around the world on this matter. He further stated, *the Call [to Human Dignity] states the reality of life in the Communion today. There is no mention of sanctions, or exclusion, in Lambeth 1.10 1998. There is much mention of pastoral care. We have a plurality of views. As Lambeth 1.10 also states: "all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the Body of Christ" and to be welcomed, cared for, and treated with respect (1.10, 1998).*

It is my view that in a Communion where we have quite diverse views on many issues, such as women's ministry, divorce, remarriage after divorce and polygamy, the idea that we have to have *one* view on same sex relationships is surprising. Furthermore, in a Communion where such a diversity of views is held, the labelling of some as "orthodox" and others as not, fails to honour that diversity.

The Call on Reconciliation. The Call to reconciliation was powerful and contained one paragraph which I believe speaks for itself and I hope it might inspire us as we work towards a Reconciliation Action Plan:

We yearn for, and commit to, reconciliation through God's saving mercy and grace in Jesus, knowing fully that without it, we are both spiritually and functionally impoverished. We are redeemed as a holy nation, yet must continue to work with God in maintaining and building our reconciled reality in God.



The Anglican Indigenous Network

I was pleased to learn about this Network which meets every two years for sacred conversations and cultural exchange amongst faithful indigenous Anglicans. They have a Facebook page – just search for Indigenous Anglicans. Find out more about their work here: <https://ain.anglicancommunion.org/>

There is a great richness and wisdom here. Surely God is leading the Church to a turning point in its history for which the full partnership of indigenous peoples is essential. Let's pledge to work more closely with our indigenous leaders who can contribute vision and gifts to transform the life of the Christian community.



Other Calls

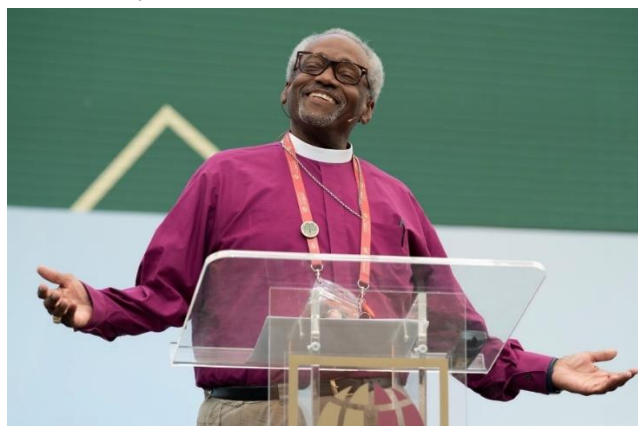
There were also calls on Mission and Evangelism, Discipleship, Science and Faith, Safeguarding, Christian Unity, Inter Faith Relations, Anglican Identity, and Environment and Sustainable Development. I will address *some* of these below under relevant headings.

SPOUSES PROGRAM



Spouses joined in much of the main Conference program but also had their own busy program. Leanne led a Bible Study Group of spouses from South Sudan, Canada, Pakistan, England, USA, Australia and Kenya as well as facilitating a small group during other sessions. These commitments meant that she was much busier and had more responsibilities than I did for most of the conference! Apart from the Bible Studies, the Spouses' Program was offered under three main headings of personal wholeness, leadership, and community action. Leanne found that the spouses program helped them to form supportive friendships, hear people's stories and to remain hopeful in this current world. Like me, Leanne heard stories of pain, injustice, and violence from parts of the world never deemed interesting enough to get onto our news feeds.

MISSION, EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP



As someone called to serve Christ in episcopal ministry I was strengthened and encouraged by the Calls to Mission and Evangelism and to Discipleship and by the resources that were made available to support mission around the Communion. We were called into a Season of Intentional Discipleship and committed ourselves to learn and *learn*

again the liberating way of Christ in every aspect of our lives, with the strength that God supplies. I hope that all Ministry Units in the Diocese can use the material *Living a Jesus-Shaped Life*. It will help to resource us as disciples in our disciple-making task. The PDF booklet is here [jsl-booklet-2019_en.pdf \(anglicancommunion.org\)](#) but more resources can be found on the website here [Intentional Discipleship \(anglicancommunion.org\)](#)

Church Planting

There was an encouraging session on Church Planting. This is very relevant for us in Grafton Diocese as we hope to plant congregations in our schools and other communities. For those who wish to connect with the Anglican Church Planting Network visit [Plant Anglican](#).

ANGLICAN IDENTITY



Personally I found the Call on Anglican Identity to be extremely helpful and encouraging at a time when the Communion seems to be challenged and pulled in different directions on divisive issues. It was helpful to be reminded that,

The Anglican tradition has its roots in a shared history committed to Catholicity, Reform, international mission, and inter-cultural witness. ... Governed by Scripture, Anglicans belong to a tradition that seeks faithfulness to God in richly diverse cultures, distinct human experiences, and deep disagreements. In communion with the See of Canterbury, the Anglican Communion has grown into a family of interdependent churches and provinces in over 165 countries.

The newly developed material *Being Anglican* is now fully available for use together with all the supporting video material. This is for small groups that want to learn more about the Anglican Christian faith. I encourage you to use it for adult Confirmation preparation, further study for LLMs, small group study and for use in Anglican Schools with staff and senior students. Participants can see Anglicans from across the world give testimonies about the experience of being Anglican today, and hear from church leaders and scholars about this, on a dedicated [YouTube channel](#). The main webpage with all the resources is here:

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/theology/theological-education/being-anglican.aspx>

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



christianclimateaction.org

Bishops at Lambeth Conference join protestors calling for climate action from the Anglican church

The Call on the Environment and Sustainable Development reminds us that environmental action is hard to sustain unless there is also the transformation of hearts and minds from which such action flows. The climate emergency is not just a physical crisis – it is also a spiritual one:

Humanity needs a spiritual and cultural transformation. We must see the world differently: repenting of and rejecting an extractive world view, which regards the earth and all nature as something to be exploited, and embracing a relational worldview, espoused especially by indigenous peoples, which sees the profound interdependence of all creation.

One of the days was set aside as an environment day. The bishops and our spouses travelled to London for lunch in the gardens of Lambeth Palace, a 12 Acre site in central London that has been in church ownership since the 12th Century. The garden was fitted out with a prayer walk on environmental issues and there were various environmental displays. The *Communion Forest* initiative was launched. This is a global initiative that involves churches, schools and other Anglican entities in forest protection, tree growing and eco-system restoration. I'm keen for parishes and schools to get involved so I'll write separately about this, but more information can be found here: <https://www.communionforest.org/>



When in London I was invited to make a statement about climate change and was later quoted in the British press stating that the catastrophic NSW Flood event is an example of the devastating effects of climate change in our region.



THE HEALTH AND COMMUNITY NETWORK – MENTAL HEALTH



In my role on the Mental Health Community of Practice of the Anglican Communion I was invited to chair a seminar on Mental Health during the Conference. Even before the COVID-19 Pandemic the world was heading for a mental health crisis. The pandemic has made this dramatically worse. It was good to hear from practitioners from around the globe about how they have been able to make a difference by working with local churches and Anglican health agencies in the area of mental health and wellbeing and clergy health. Perhaps not surprisingly in our current environment the workshop was very well attended. Many attendees expressed a willingness to help us to better connect mental health workers from around the Communion. More information about the Anglican Health and Community Network can be found here: <https://ahcn.anglicancommunion.org/>

OVERALL REFLECTION



In all, the conference challenged me to view my particular place in Anglicanism in Australia within the landscape of a global Communion. It offered those of us who attended the gift of de-centering ourselves in the face of the spirit-infused diversity of a global body of Christ.

Rather than me offering more reflection here I thought I would quote from Lizzy Flaherty, one of the young adults who worked as a Volunteer Steward at the Conference. It perfectly sums up the experience that Leanne and I had. I quote Lizzy with her permission (@lbflaherty77):

I've spent the last three weeks stewarding at the Lambeth Conference, helping out, keeping people safe, and generally trying to keep Bishops out of chaos! The stewards (from 22 countries) were a wonderful bunch of young people: faithful, kind, hilarious! The future of the Anglican Church is bright indeed! Should you have been following the discourse about the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Communion on social media, you have probably heard a story of division, of anger, polarisation, and potentially even hatred. From our

experiences, that couldn't be further from the truth. Instead we witnessed almost everyone present walking and witnessing together across ideological boundaries, treating each other with love, and acting in the unity to which we are called.

THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION

At the Conference we were reminded by our study of 1 Peter that God's mission in which we participate is a call from darkness to light (1 Peter 2:9). As Anglicans our call to mission is expressed in the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission. This sense of a shared missionary inheritance and calling, together with the sense of belonging that we shared, meant that Lambeth 2022 was able to conclude with the acknowledgement that difference is possible among our provinces because of, not in spite of, our common confession. I finish with the post Communion Prayer from the Opening Eucharist of the Lambeth Conference held in Canterbury Cathedral - the words are framed around the Five Marks of Mission:

*God of love, we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ,
who calls us to proclaim the good news of your kingdom;
to teach, baptise, and nurture new believers;
to respond to human need by loving service;
to transform unjust structures of society;
and to strive to safeguard the integrity of your creation.
Empower us to fulfil this calling
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who, with the Holy Spirit,
inspires us to mission and service, now and for ever.
Amen.*

+Murray
6 October 2022

