

THE JOURNEY FORWARD TOGETHER

Reflections on Matthew 5:13-36

A contribution to the
Commission on the Anglican Communion
and its life

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Then Jesus ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.
Taking the five loaves and the two fish,
He looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves,
And gave them to the disciples,
And the disciples gave them to the crowds.
And all ate and were filled;
And they took up what was left over of the broken pieces,
Twelve baskets full.

Christian discipleship is supplied with Jesus' authority.
This is the authority of hope, which is given divine power.

Alive in the generosity of God

The responsible charge given to the Commission on the Anglican Communion is to nourish and prosper life. This necessarily involves a care and concern for its own life, as for the life of a diverse and dispersed Communion. Such life, given and shared, broken and dispersed, is also given for the sake of a hurting and dangerous world.

The journey forward is disciplined by the canonical, theological and ecclesiological expertise represented on the Commission. This expertise is respected, substantial and representative of much of the diversity facing the Communion.

The Commission has the authority and the legitimacy given by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the whole Communion. This is important authority which, like water in a dry land or food in the desert, must not be squandered.

It is the view of this contribution that the axis of the work of the Commission is hope. It is a theology of divine hope which sustains the earth within our created universe. It is disciplines and shared practices of hope which sustain our common life. It is narratives of our experience of the fruits of hope which strengthen faith. It is hope in the hope which is to come into fullness which is our common bond. Hope creates shared vision which has the power to sustain the future of the Communion.

The axis of hope has a number of resources, including:

- The living faith and witness of Anglicans across the globe in local churches
- The collegiality, co operation and the common faith affirmed by the Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury following their meeting in October 2003, which builds on previous meetings and previous Lambeth Conferences
- The nourishment of faith as the gospel is shared, lives transformed and communities served through the witness of Anglicans in diverse life worlds

- Our capacity to share and celebrate these stories of Anglican laity and leadership in lived mission and discipleship. These stories affirm the power and life of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in our midst and in our times in remarkable ways
- Our historical memory of God’s faithfulness to his church, including the apostolic Anglican traditions, in times smooth and through times of conflict, disorder and pain
- The commitment, testimony and gospel of salvation brought by Anglicans through commitment to justice and reconciliation for the communities where they live
- Our experience and testimony of the power and authority of Jesus Christ to heal, teach, feed, disconcert, comfort, accompany and save.

The above resources are living food, which sustain hope, around the axis of common mission.

This is where the journey begins.

What we hold together in common is Christ.
This is who holds us together.

The life of God inspires vision, originates mission and mobilises hope

The view espoused in this contribution is that sources of constructive energy are most likely to be mobilised around discussion and affirmation of the vision held in common and the common action which flows from this source.

It is my view that agreement and helpful language need be created within the Commission around the vision and mission of what holds the Anglican Communion together. This language and conversation will go broader than structures and personnel, significant as those are. The meta-story of our common experience includes discipleship to Christ’s call and work. I believe that by such a beginning the Commission will develop constructive and hopeful energy. It is shared commitment and shared mission (in specific work together) which will enable the Commission to work through the complex and delicate tasks which lie ahead.

The creation of a new Commission has a number of potential advantages. These advantages include:

- A clear mandate and authority given by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the Communion
- Timely reporting
- Positional influence and access to key opinion leaders and shapers
- Diverse geographical and cultural representation
- The creation of alternative space for discussion and exploration of new options.

Risks facing the Commission which will need to be mitigated include:

- Working in ambiguous space, where there are competitors for space
- Compensating for the weakness inherent in seeking to use and encourage cooperative power and non violent forms of influence
- Appropriate responsiveness of timing and pace
- The lack of institutional supports, including norms and sanctions, to manage global conflict and local-global identity issues.

I begin by comments on working to strengths.

The life of God and the authority of Jesus make new spaces possible.

Creating safe, hospitable and impartial spaciousness

The advantages of the Commission's institutional authority can, in my view, be strengthened by the Commission seeing its role as including the creation of safe, hospitable spaces, open to divergent views and not threatened by strong emotions.

In my own reflection on the issues likely to be facing the Commission, I have been helped by distinguishing the three different kinds of social spaces that the Commission will be working in. These three spaces are:

Public space, open to the whole Communion and to the public domain.

Examples from my culture include the shopping mall, public events, the daily newspaper, the customers and clients my workplace serves

Social space, ie the spaces which make ordinary community living possible.

Examples from my culture include the local shop, the neighbourhood park or club, the local newspaper, my work place

Interpersonal space, ie close (but not intimate) social relationships. Examples from my culture include neighbours, work colleagues, business associates, members of groups, organisations or teams I belong to and with whom I have frequent working relationships.

Healthy organisations span these three spaces. Each "space" has distinctive forms of what constitutes appropriate social distance, social behaviour and forms of communication.

Important to the Commission's work will be the selection of the appropriate space/s within which to conduct the different aspects of its work. For example part of the present sensitivities involves issues surrounding homosexuality (intimate space). In part conflicts are being exacerbated because communication is being attempted using some of the ground rules of intimate space where inflammatory debates are being transacted in public space. This will not be productive. My experience of such conflicts is that the domain of the work to be done needs to be shifted. In the first instance the creation of new spaces (eg the formation of the Commission) allows greater distance between heated parties and buys time and gives new "space" and new rules about conduct. In this way new opportunities are created for participants.

It is also important to note that the creation of intermediary spaces by the Commission could be significant. For example in Australia the verandah links interpersonal space with social space. In North America the porch links social and public space. The creation of safe private spaces, and relationships of different kinds, are likely to be critical to the outcomes of the Commission.

God's spaciousness is hospitable and open.
It is trustworthy and safe.
It creates new and unexpected resources for us.

Securing safe space

In particular the work of the Commission in its own life will be more likely to be viable by:

- The Commission seeing itself in terms of creating hospitable spaces, open to the future and open to the diversity of the Communion and open to the creativity of God for our well being
- By being open, trustworthy and safe ground, the Commission will be more likely to favour the honest and frank discussions begun by the Primates
- Awareness of the strong feelings aroused by the current confluence of situations, and the strongly held and divergent understandings of the meaning of Anglican identity and unity. The issues raised go to the heart of our sense of life and well being, our hunger and the search for satisfaction long term
- Minimising the preconditions for discussion to be able to occur in safe, neutral, hospitable territory
- Recognising that weak social bonds are favourable to bringing coherence to large social systems, ie strong "fellowship" expectations are not necessary between all parties to achieve a common outcome
- Maximising opportunities for face saving, loosening of "positions" which may be rigid or becoming entrenched
- Refusing to personalise or minimalise or ostracise what are in fact substantive and legitimate issues
- Recognising that legitimacy has very different meanings in different cultural-historical contexts. Public respect and deep listening to different social-historical locations is essential
- Coming to agreement as to the rules of engagement between parties where there is hostility, suspicion or real or perceived threat.
- Hosting, sponsoring or facilitating private and trustworthy explorations among parties who may be suspicious of each other and whose engagement in this way is both possible and potentially helpful to all parties
- Being in touch with local regional points of connection to both hear and listen and to disseminate appropriate communication

- Being supported by expertise in the management of public media contact. Proven resources with experience in dealing with agnostic-hostile media channels will be critical as part of wider strategies of information/communication management.

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

New life experiences change us
Deep change challenges our sense of identity.
Who are we now?, we ask.
Where will this take us?

Where we are headed: who are we now?

The Anglican Communion can be seen in terms of distinctive history, ecclesiology and theology. By history, mission and grace the Communion has become a global communion of Anglican churches. Of necessity the Communion also takes social forms. Thus the Anglican Communion can also be seen as a distinctive social organisation. As a social organisation Anglicanism now takes global forms in what are both traditional and emergent arrangements of Anglican “society”. This involves what some are calling “the reinvention of Anglicanism”.

When we look at the Anglican Communion as a social organisation, the origins of the Communion were from an established centre. This “centre” has a very distinctive history and associated patterns of church-state establishment, canon law and ecclesial-social engagement. These patterns have not been replicated in other Anglican settings, which are both connected to England *and* distinct from England *and* distinct from each other.

Seen as a Communion of communions, each of the constituent Anglican jurisdictions has grown in different ways with distinctive histories, juridical authority and some distinctive traditions. Thus the balance between the traditional “centre” and the constituent parts has changed. Ambiguities in the balance of power and the sources of authority have emerged. Changes in the power resources and in the balances of power are occurring. This is occurring at a time when leadership in the global sense is not cohesively matched to or supported by developed structural forms and protocols. The Commission has been created as a forum for the consideration of these issues, partly because of the lack of alternative spaces of helpful inquiry, discussion and re-negotiation.

Balancing the risks inherent in the situation, there are certain distinctive commitments of Anglicanism. These distinctives are also potential strengths, as well as sources of strain.

Seen as a global organisation, the contemporary Anglican Communion has the advantages of at least four distinctive aspects of social organisation. Each of these is part of its distinctive identity. Each of them is important to its participation in the mission of God and the commission of Christ.

These four distinctive opportunities are:

- It is a voluntary organisation, whose paid resources are built on voluntary effort and commitment
- It is not for profit in material, monetary terms. Such organisations to flourish are oriented by agreed and shared mission
- It is diverse
 - geographically
 - culturally
 - historically
 - theologically
 - hermeneutically
 - structurally
- It is now reliant on the use of non violent forms of power and force.

A significant part of the practical discernment and skill of the Commission will be to work to favour the strengths of these features, and to minimise the potential weaknesses.

We are sent by Jesus on ahead.
However that exposes us to great dangers.
These dangers come from strong outside and hostile forces.

The present challenges of the Communion mirror global forces, without as well as within

I have been invited to offer my own distinctive perspective to the Commission for its consideration. As a missiologist with sociological experience, it seems to me that historically the Communion finds itself to be in the position of having become a global organisation of a very distinctive kind.

As a Communion of communions this experience is relatively new. It places the Anglican Communion in new and uncharted territory. This means that in terms of discerning and carrying out its mission, the Communion finds itself recontextualised. What this means in practical terms is suggested below.

Internal pressures are identity questions

The new situation the Communion finds itself in at the turn of a new millennium is creating an environment in which heated discussion is arising among and between sub groups within the Communion. Leadership is facing the risks associated with identity confusion, ambiguity, conflict and polarisation. The changed and unprecedented contexts facing the Communion also impacts on how the Communion could choose to relate to those outside the Communion. Accordingly the Anglican Communion is in

serious confusion as to how the Communion will express its core principles of identity.

Likewise the Communion is journeying regarding how the structural instruments of unity and the marks of unity are to be interpreted in divergent, unfamiliar and anxiety raising circumstances.

Relationships as well as canon law and particular ecclesial structures are also significant to Anglican identity. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams put it this way speaking in an interview to the BBC following the October 2003 Primates gathering (ACNS 3640):

What complicates matters where the Anglican Communion is concerned is that we're not a single monolithic body with a single decision making authority. Our Communion depends a great deal on relationships rather than rules, and it's those relationships that are strained at the moment.

Holding up the global mirror

Internal pressures and anxieties are being exacerbated by unfamiliar global contexts which impact on us all. As a global organisation situated among other global organisations and forces, the Communion is facing unprecedented contexts and outside pressures. These external pressures combine to create additional ambiguity, animosity and anxiety.

They include (indicative only):

- Leadership structures globally are breaking down and/or being significantly redefined in terms of what constitutes appropriate governance
- Organised force is typical in contexts where internal power balances are unstable or where ambiguity creates a vacuum or where minorities force coercion on majorities
- New forms of global organisation have arisen alongside or challenging national/geographic forms. Capital and the associated forces of power are mobile, opportunist, competitive, adversarial, with a limited sense of self interest. Together these pose alternative forms of authority, eg to established states or culture/s or traditions
- The above dynamics favour responses in terms of tribalism and limited spheres of interest politics. Identity/ideology politics and conflicts become common. Alternative sources of authority are sought. In the current Anglican context, single issue politics (around divergent single issues) seek dominance or recognition
- Rapid social change and restructuring globally creates new forms of power and influence, frequently challenging weak or established forms.

Each of these aspects of contemporary globalisation is reflected in different ways and from different perspectives in the churches of the Communion.

Many members and churches of the Communion are subject to these forms of strains and pressures daily in ways which risk honour, dignity, just opportunity and, for some, the basic preconditions of survival.

An important question therefore becomes: what is the global impact for the mission of God for the life of the world if the Anglican Communion itself buckles under these pressures? How can the distinctive and precious resources of our common life be valued and preserved?

The strains and difficulties posed to the Communion by the changed global contexts and external powers cannot be resolved. They can however be managed and responded to, more or less well.

A great strength which the Communion brings is the enormous social capital in which we all share. This social capital includes leadership, labour, physical and moral resources devoted to the sharing of the gospel. This through proclamation and evangelism, prayer and worship, schools and health care, social welfare and caring ministries, communal and national reconciliation, justice and peace making in the face of war and social abuse, even martyrdom.

These are some of the aspects of the shared identity and mission of the Anglican Communion. These forms of proclamation and service, teaching and loving response, social transformation and the safeguarding of the integrity of creation are the marks of mission of the Anglican Communion. In evangelism, mission and witness, the Anglican Communion participates in, and is formed in its identity by, the *missio dei*. As the Primates of the thirty eight Provinces stated in their statement issued following their meeting in Lambeth Palace October 15-16, 2003:

[We are] led into a deeper commitment to work together, and we affirm our pride in the Anglican inheritance of faith and order and our firm desire to remain part of a Communion, where what we hold in common is much greater than that which divides us in proclaiming the Good News to the world.

We find our common salvation through commitment to each other.
We develop our resilience through common effort.
We find new energies for pulling together as we work together against counter forces from the outside.
We hold on in hope.
We wait for the life of Jesus to come in new ways.

Reassessing and reframing our resources

It is my understanding that there is espoused respect for the centre, represented by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates. In circumstances of ideological/secessionist conflict, the following questions are relevant. What are the risks and costs of disaffiliation, locally and globally? What perceptual loyalties, what ecclesial shifts, what protocols will be necessary to preserve the benefits of common strength and distinctive contribution globally, as well as provide satisfaction internally? What relationships (personal and non personal) need attention?

In the light of the above it is not surprising that within the Communion, its sense of its own internal resources is under strain. Traditional internal resources include:

Scripture (and its interpretation)
historical narrative and interpretation,
theological commitments and discussion,
development and stewardship of resources: for example liturgy, property, the capacity for authentic, gospel connections between local churches and Dioceses to their wider community/ies and societies
distribution of resources (including leadership, money and power) and mechanisms of structural governance.

Each of these poses significant and different ways of approaching identity questions.

Resources additional to the above which are highlighted in this paper are based on a three fold strength. This triad of strengths and supports additional to the above includes:

- Consideration of the structural-institutional arrangements not for profit global organisations of a similar size are finding helpful and effective. For example, I note that experience with large NGOs suggests that memoranda of understanding, heads of agreement, policies and formal protocols are necessary mechanisms for their ordering of social organisation. Similarly in NGOs, institutional mission is reliant on non coercive force, and rules based on precedent and local application of policy agreements rather than on uniform law. Synchronic (ie historical) constructions of institutional coherence need to be assessed against diachronic (ie contemporary social) constructions of institutional leadership and governance when applied to organisations with a global span. Such inquiry may assist the Primates for example in their assessment and discernment of their “enhanced responsibilities”.
- A continuing focus on the missional identity of Anglicans the sharing of stories from around the Communion. This will provide constructive energy and will open different parts of the Communion to the diverse ways in which the life of God is being shared and experienced through Anglicans and Dioceses and Provinces in mission across the globe.
- Disciplined attention to the larger social good that forms and motivates the life and identity of the *ecclesia*. Internal issues and concerns of teaching and building up, of strengthening people in their relationship with God and each other, are linked to the outward focus which is the mission of Christ in the life of the world.

Managing risks

In the light of the above, the following suggestions are made for consideration by the Commission in its work:

- Societies and groups with supported institutions, rules and norms for managing conflict and established forms of governance are better placed to peacefully navigate change.

Strengthening the capacity for conflict resolution is a key part of leadership and governance today. Groups with fragile social bonds, little consensus on values, and limited commitment to shared interests and identity are likely to buckle.
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- In my own work with churches and judicatories and in my reading of ecclesiology I find that churches are apt to become self absorbed in how they construct their sense of identity. It is easy for groups under pressure to contract in their thinking processes. It is easy for our hearts to harden against one another in resistance to what the Book of Common Prayer calls “the imagination of our hearts”.

Structured processes of listening, of modelling the capacity for empathy, narratives which stand participants in the shoes/sandals of another, experiences of effective common action across heart-mind divides are likely to be very helpful

- I note in the documents which accompany the establishment of the Commission the frequent reference to anxiety. I wish to stress from my own work the importance and helpfulness of reducing anxiety in an overwrought system.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the reduction of anxiety, including in the Commission’s own relationships, tone, language and communication. This is a preliminary to re-establishing trust, and establishing credible common exploratory ground

- While internal pressures and traditions are important, the primary identity of the church is to be outward focussed. With respect to the task facing the Commission, outward and onward focus clearly has local-global dimensions, and insider-outsider issues to navigate.

Conflict and responses that focuses on the internal issues alone are likely to be debilitating. By contrast new options become possible if highly polarised groups can find common commitment around a higher compelling vision and outward focus, and through recognition of the benefits of joint action in the face of common counter forces. With respect to internal focus, majority groups will move from self preoccupation and defensiveness if the vision and identity match is compelling enough. Similarly entrenched systems are given capacity to shift if there are foreseeable stages. Negotiated change or mediated/arbitrated outcomes around larger common goals and interests are sustainable if sub group interests and identity are protected or enhanced

- Contemporary global tensions are being experienced differently by those in the Communion.

Analysis of the Commission of the present difficulties and tensions will include consideration of:

- * Collegiality
- * The impact and dynamics within local contexts
- * Cross cultural engagement
- * Global dimensions.

- Mapping will be differentiated and multivocal. However a critical part of the dynamics is that different global locations and contexts impact on perceptions.

What drives and feeds conflict is the perceptions and definitions of the participants. These perceptions are dynamic, and can also be rigid-unstable. Different participants and social-cultural-tribal locations describe what is culturally and socially desirable, or possible or acceptable.

When evening came,
Jesus was there alone,(up the mountain by himself),
but by this time the boat, battered by the waves,
was far from the land,
for the wind was against them.

When we are in danger we are afraid.
We feel life is at risk.
We are aware of the elements set against us.

Storm and tempest: Pressures and counterforces

Distinguishing presenting issues from underlying issues

The current pressures are certainly about distinctive and very divisive ecclesial issues. While human sexuality is a key presenting issue, it is not the only issue raised, as the Commission is well aware. In the statement issued by the Anglican News Service on 15 October, 2003 Archbishop Robin Eames makes very clear that there is in fact a cluster of complexly inter related issues. These reflect diverse concerns and, in some cases, very particular cultural perceptions and responses. This particular issue, as the Primates have noted, is also linked to a diversity of interpretations with respect to the authority of Scripture and its interpretation.

Some examples of the complexity and the diversity of perceptions follow. As the presenting issue, human sexuality is a powerful religious and social symbol. It is charged with strong emotional attachments and is linked to different social constructions. For example human sexuality issues is characterised in some environments as the key litmus of Biblical faith and moral faithfulness. In some quarters issues of sexuality have become linked to hermeneutics and an alleged battle for the Bible. In other quarters vigilant groups define the issues in terms of rights and tolerance. Yet others base deep grounds for concern in issues of respect, social scandal, public shame and disgrace. All claim substantive grounds to be orthodox and faithful to Anglicanism.

It is in the interests of the Commission and the Communion for the Commission to treat all significant issues identified in a substantive manner. I am myself of the view that the homosexuality issue is a primary presenting issue around which other issues are attaching. For many the attachments are substantive, for some the linkages are opportunistic. Human sexuality is not the issue on which the future of the Communion can or ought to be navigated. Discernment of the appropriate meta-issues around

which constructive discussions and potential agreements can be affirmed and/or negotiated is, in my view, the route forward.

Koinonia as a stabilising energy

If the task is re framed in this way, it is important to take as a working basis that groups are mostly well intentioned. This is to take *koinonia* as a significant basis of workable relationships.

Maintaining space hospitable to others

I have already noted that social relations will be conducted in at least three different kinds of spaces: in public space, in social space and in more proximate interpersonal space. (The fourth kind of space is intimate space which, as we are all aware, has become highly charged and inflammatory.) Each of these spaces has behaviours, courtesies and norms appropriate to it. Public, social and interpersonal spaces each offer distinctive opportunities for safe space and exploratory ground, *given favourable conditions and wise selection appropriate to context.*

Each space too mandates different kinds of communication opportunities and styles. Appreciation and application of the opportunities of each kind of space will greatly assist the likelihood of communication being appropriate to context.

Sharp conflict could be more likely to be defused and the level of aggression reduced by moving from intimate-personal space to public-social spaces and language. In this shift, ordinary social graces such as giving space, exercising tact and discretion are normative. Social graces of being neighbourly, saving face, and being culturally appropriate are all significant contributors to common weal in the face of common woe.

At this point I wish to affirm again the role of the Commission in terms of its position and role in public space and in providing a variety of kinds of safe and hospitable spaces where common identity can be explored, losses acknowledged, opportunities tested, risks assessed, constituents' willingness to follow tested, and where political and social face can be saved. Against counter forces and pressures a significant role of the Commission is to create and preserve "holding places" where such work can be explored.

Groups experiencing danger risk falling apart.
We feel tempted to withdraw, or to blame or to fight one another.

Experiencing third parties in constructive ways

One of the practical challenges facing the Commission concerns its role and relationships with respect to third parties. The Commission has been given mandate as a third party in constructive intervention. This authority is likely to include the oversight and facilitation of constructive third party intervention by others. These kinds of roles and relationships make unhealthy triangulation a significant danger.

With respect to third party dynamics the following are suggested:

- The potentially important role of internal third parties and indigenous peace makers
- Emphasis on building constituencies and capacity within and between groups is likely to be more productive than one shot, external mediation efforts
- Learn from particular cultures how to manage conflicts in a sustained way over time in their context/s.

With respect to communication and negotiation in dispersed and cross cultural contexts, attention is drawn to the following:

- Reciprocal communication is more likely to occur at horizontal levels across the organisation. Where there are imbalances in position or power relationships, mechanisms for feedback are critical. For example top downwards communication is typically one way, or links with adjacent groups only
- In tribal and more face to face social groups, trusted communication is typically via clan and tribe. Thus the “bridges of God” are personal connection and trust, sponsorship by indigenous leadership, host-guest relationships, and time. These are contexts where key opinion leaders are located near the top, and who have the capacity socially to explore and subsequently enact decisions in connection with their group
- Other contexts are larger, heterogenous, impersonal and frequently characterised by aggression. Here communication is via opinion leaders, allowing time for the effective diffusion of ideas. Challenges to belief or action must be addressed to the groups socially capable of making such decisions.
- On sensitive issues, in most social dynamics, it is preferable to speak to significant others (or their delegates) than about them.

The experience and expertise of the Commission and its resources will obviously add wisdom, discernment and practical expertise to these critical issues.

If we are to survive great danger,
We must focus on preserving life.
We commit ourselves to life-preserving action.
To focus on distractions or to become rigid with fear
will place our life in even greater danger.

Finding focus through the common ground

Of very significant concern is the levels of negative energy in the current situation/s. These appear to be escalating, and the middle ground rapidly shrinking. I note that if issues are to be discussable, the key to systems shifting lies with the middle ground and in the creation of shared ground. In the heat of the vortex many come to believe the future lies with the vocal margins or with strong minority groups. Shrill minorities and highly charged entrenched positions are not the key to resolution. Discernment of the substantive issues and interests from the distracting or the opportunist will be key to the effectiveness of the Commission's work.

This task is easier said than done. By way of concrete analogy about situational mapping, I offer the following illustration. The "map" of the London underground was a unique design and this style of map has subsequently been copied around the world. It is graphic and indicative. It is user friendly. It does not reflect the literal route in all its deviations, twists and turns. It does justice however to a complex system. It provides accurate orientation, overall direction, navigation and identification of parallel lines, single line routes, critical pressure points and intersections of connection. The alternative would be a "spaghetti map", a series of explanations going in all directions, creating confusion as to destinations, or even barriers to proceeding.

Undoubtedly members of the Commission bring much experience and many competencies. These include principles and common experience of creating means and mechanisms to foster shared identity, without compulsion to be or become "close". Appropriate shared public symbols, and most particularly language, are critical.

How and what we communicate strongly influences the possible outcomes

I wish to stress at this point the issue of language. In my own work over the past few years I have come to realise and appreciate the power of language to create being. Constructive and rich use of language is highly correlated with healthy organisational life. For example focus on conflict language is likely to compound conflicts. Hence in this paper I have focussed on journey, on common mission and the establishment of common interests. Common interests and a compelling vision are the overture to the motivation and establishment of shared identity.

Language choice and probably the invention of new language will be critical. Important too will be the vesting of traditional language with new power and significances. Some indicators of language choices and their impact follow. For example the mirroring by the Commission of labelling, scapegoating or separatist language will increase polarisation. It will also reduce the capacity for openness to the other. Anxiety language increases anxiety. A calm presence helps reduce it. The repetition of bifurcated (either-or) definitions and analysis will compound and compulse ideological polarisation.

To quite a significant degree the future we wish to arrive at is established by the language, metaphors and symbols we choose to use and affirm. In the present circumstances the perception of being listened to could create the environment in

which perceptual shifts and new responses become possible. New forms (and forums) of discussion, new language and new structural forms and agreed protocols, along with a certain lightness of touch and openness of spirit are all likely to be necessary.

Using indigenous forms of communication and indigenous authority

Given the cross cultural nature of the Communion, effective communication also needs to incorporate into its structures the valid indigenous forms of the respective sub groups within the social organisation as a whole. Establishing points of contact between groups and interests will be critical to reducing risks and threats and strengthening possibilities for common life. Coherent common action will be led by information power, exchange power, problem solving, mediation, conciliation and structural justice. Authoritative communicators will be those who have something worthwhile to communicate, ie those with common identification. They will also have social authority to make decisions or to address and influence the groups who have the social authority to make decisions.

Our choices in the face of danger reflect our beliefs about power.
What sources of power and influence do we have? How will we use these?
For what purpose? With what results?

Power, influence and position

In this section I have meditated on space and language in terms of maximising available opportunities and minimising possible constraints. I wish to conclude with a little more elaboration with respect to power and power dynamics.

In a post colonial setting the present power configurations make the Communion as a global entity vulnerable in ways it has not experienced before. For example “the centre” and the identity of the global Communion is reliant on co operative power from local settings. However co operative power between Provinces, regions and Dioceses in many instances is weak. In these circumstances experience, capacity and aptitude for co operative power is also likely to be weak.

In the presenting situation, Provinces have weak co operative power between each other, *and weak motivation to exercise their capacity for co operative power in the current circumstances.*

It appears that Dioceses are exercising their co operative power along different kinds of alignments and in accordance with different kinds of motivations. It is not that co operative power is not or cannot be exercised. It is rather that co operative power is being exercised selectively. Critically also, co operation is not simply being forged along geographic/national lines. Alignments (and threat) are motivated by ideology. Alliances are also linked to economic power and resources.

From the perspectives of the centre and the Communion as a global entity, the moves towards disaffiliation are zero sum responses. This is a dangerous dynamic. The threats secession and moves towards alternative sources of authority also reflect the high sense of frustration and limited sense of power negotiation options and channels. It is a power context where options for those dissenting are dangerously polarised.

This, at least in part, is because

- options are perceived to be limited, or are being constructed as limited,
- because enabling institutional frameworks are either disabled or not available and/or
- because certain interests are promoted by organisational stalemate and instability.

By its very nature efforts towards co operative power needs to be linked to other forms of power. For example information power, networking power, personal power and institutional power. Networking power and institutional mechanisms can link co operation to sanctions and to compliance/conformity. The present situation exposes an organisation which is vulnerable institutionally, given expectations of problem solving which has been requested from the initiative of “the centre”. However “the ship” of global governance is not presently empowered or equipped for the place it finds itself.

Power is also exercised by positions and forms of influence which are authorised by those being led. Non compliance and the exercise of sanctions are forms of power.

My own experience suggests:

- Co operative power needs to be supplemented by other forms of power and leadership influence, non violent force and resistance, and the availability of sanctions
- Resistance to abusive uses of power is part of responsible leadership
- Non violent forms of power, force and resistance can be mobilised to resist violence
- Unequal power balances perpetuate disequilibrium or stalemates. Management and perhaps reconciliation of divergent interests is linked to greater justice in the use and balance of power
- The politics of polarisation and single issue politics favour enemy making within our own ranks. Outward focus and common effort towards opportunities and against common threats helps secure a more unitive vision. It is mutual interdependence rather than unilateral autonomies which secures moral force which commands respect.

And early in the morning
Jesus came walking towards them on the sea....
And they cried out in fear.
But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said,
“Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid.”
Peter answered him, “Lord if it is you,
Command me to come to you on the water.”
Jesus said, “Come!”

Jesus teaches us that we save our life by sharing it.

Experiencing fear: taking heart, taking risks

The delicate and diverse sensitivities facing the Communion at this time can be seen as a complex political emergency. As the Commission is well aware, discussions and settlements will need to be conducted at international, regional and relational levels. Cultural awareness and recognition at all levels are likely to be necessary. In the process changes in institutional discourse and structures are likely to come into view, unless the various kinds of polarisations and instabilities are going to be sustained or fracture.

Efforts to secure *shalom* by international agents and agencies need to be linked to the role of indigenous moderators and peace makers. Whether the Commission will seek input from a third party outsider, with international experience, in the role of adviser on global-cultural-ideological dynamics could be seriously considered. Local contacts and effective “listening posts” and feedback sources are of course crucial to the work.

Using indigenous forms of language and indigenous authority

Experience suggests that a helpful emphasis of the Commission and its successors is on building constituencies with the will and the capacity to manage conflict over time. Another key resource is to learn from distinctive cultures how to manage conflict in a sustained way over time. By way of specific example it is probably helpful to note here that Western style resolution styles frequently favour up front relationships, assertive time scales, expectation of all participant participation as the hall mark of agreement, “positions” and trade offs.

Other cultures favour more indirect and highly relational methods, where saving the face of the other is critical, with more subtle forms of understanding of what constitutes “agreement” and where longer time frames for reflection and constituent discussion off the table are examples of productive dynamics. The experience of the Commission will further add to and nuance these examples.

Sensitive issues and their discussion and resolution have their own diverse rhythm, including strong emotions. Examples include fears of abandonment, risk of identity confusion or even death, disorientation, withdrawal and triumphalism-despair. Holding on and travelling through takes commitment and discipline, greatly assisted by agreed processes at the outset.

Surprised by grace

I recall in my own work how frequently the rhythm shifts, like a boat on a wild sea. However patient and expectant waiting can be gifted with moments of sheer grace. Some examples follow. These gifts could include a significant perceptual shift, a reframing of the issues, the capacity for deep empathy with the situation and pain of another, the willingness to share or shift ground or to trade spaces. These are moments of grace to be received with gratitude, respected and acknowledged, and not frittered or abused. It is of course worship and prayer which create the environment in which Divine grace will be expected, recognised and welcomed in gratitude.

Staying alert

Part of the risk and perceived danger of the current situation by many of the participants is that the current tensions are not amenable to predictable solutions. The Communion finds itself in the position it is in because significant and familiar ways of working are no longer working.

In this kind of ambiguity, some well motivated intentions attempt to fill the void. Charts for uncharted waters begin to appear. Common examples in many situations include working along previously effective lines only harder, adopting limited “solutions” based on fixed positions and particular viewing points which satisfy particular groups, or providing comfort through bi polar analysis and “in-group” solutions to differentiated problems and eliminating any other groups from awareness or consideration.

The courage to choose and to take appropriate risks by key participants is always a part of the peace building story. The heart and mind to choose the big story in the face of partisan safety or aggrandisement is also the peace building way. Similarly creative option seeking, openness to the opportunity of the unexpected, can be the heart of journeying in a new way.

So Peter got out of the boat,
started walking on the water,
and came towards Jesus.
But when he noticed the strong wind,
he became frightened,
and beginning to sink, he cried out,
“Lord save me!”

Leaders explore new options and make new discoveries such that others can follow.

The will to reach out and walk forward is uneven

I have suggested that the work of the Commission will be operating at structural-protocol/constitutional levels as well as at relational-community-cultural levels. Cooperation is currently being sought between involved international elements and local and internal ones. The goal is sustained commitment over time.

This goal is under strain where parties are pursuing “needs” rather than interests. When ground is claimed and issues framed in terms of “needs”, positions quickly become fixed. “Needs” are self preoccupied and self focussed. I find in practice that they become non negotiable. There is also significant and real threat where the tone is tense, vicious and “irrational”.

By contrast by exploring “interests”, the capacity for relational empathy becomes possible. Groups defined by interests can develop “currency” of shared ground. Identified common interests provide an authentic basis for shared work, and shared outcomes of mutual benefit with other groups.

Commitment over time to contact points of common interests is especially important in federated structures such as the Anglican Communion. Here the centre is relatively formally weak, though it is endowed with considerable historical, positional, symbolic and moral power and authority. In the contemporary Anglican Communion, significant identity and decision making power and authority are also dispersed locally. Where formal structures are federated, negotiations are necessarily complex, even convoluted. Processes of change are slow. These are givens in this form of structure and governance.

Leadership energy can be dissipated by counter tensions

However, in parallel with global forces and pressures, more disciplined agreement about authority structures is breaking down. There are not obvious mechanisms or agreed protocols as to how severe disagreement will be discussed and handled at the global level of the organisation (or at least not obvious or legitimate to some). Withdrawal/secession is being used as a key threat. Disaffiliation is being seriously discussed as the normative form of relation.

Traditional areas of tension are shifting, also in parallel with global conflict. Traditional areas of boundary and authority tension continue: ie territory, economic resources, East/West-North/South. Globalisation is also compounding and extending the tensions around communal identity. Communal identity is already a perennial issue, and a threshold issue, in organisations which are values based--as is the Anglican Communion.

In addition as traditional patterns of authority and order are under challenge, “exclusionist” politics and identities seem persuasive as alternative sources of identity. Such dynamics provide a shield from economic disparity, and defend unequal power relationships. They also promise structure in the face of ambiguity and the fear of chaos.

Stress and distress can be soothed by well placed risks

This raises the significant issues of pace and timing. The discernment and appropriate calibration of pace and timing will be crucial at certain junctures. Part of the critical judgment of the Commission will be to register and to respond where stress and distress are intolerable. The Commission needs to be in touch with the distress at all levels.

In the meta narrative of the journey story here being meditated upon, distress does not prevent forward movement. The timing however of new movement within the story is not haphazard. Manageable levels of distress, coupled with trusted support firmly in view, permits risk and a new understanding of a new world. Through calculated risk, leadership initiative, and emotional and social resilience a new world-view is made possible.

It is not the whole group who moves in the same way together. Significant and suitably timed leadership and symbolic acts, in the face of distress, create a sustainable holding pattern. At the same time these same acts create new kinds of spaces within which new capacities, realignments and possibilities are imaginable and discussable.

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Doubt is part of risk.
But faith is supported by Jesus and nearness to him.

Establishing the bases for shared legitimacy

Faith-with-some doubting and faith, with some doubting, is part of the dynamics of all discipleship groups. Leadership too is hazardous, and these are dangerous times.

What some participants perceive as "conservative" forces are in fact legitimate tradition keepers and tradition bearers. It is also part of the paradox of change that tradition keepers are also the seed bearers of productive change. Thus the moderate middle of tradition bearers and change agents have a lot of potential common ground, *given favourable contexts, motivations and relationships*. The danger of the present situation is that significant middle ground is open to being co opted by strong voices located further towards the margins. This makes the possibility of serious instability a critical threat.

Another of the risks in the current situation is that the current norms of knowledge are not sufficient to the challenges. This will be tested by the Commission. The number of issues in the present confluence, and the vehemence, are strong indicators that a significant reframing of the opportunities and a re assessment of the risks facing the Communion is a necessary part of the structured conversation at many levels.

When they got into the boat
the wind ceased.

Dangerous times may pass.
Life has power to create and renew.

The capacity of human memory allows communities of faith to hallow the stories of adversity overcome, of forces and counterforces calmed. Fear gives way to recognition, separation is followed by restoration. New life is brought into being on

new terms. The long night brings disarming surprises. Established forms of authority are understood in a new light. New understandings of worship recentre or reaffirm loyalties and allegiances.

The capacity for human imagination opens communities of faith to re imagine possibilities. The capacity for communal resilience offers opportunities to steadfastness which extend beyond the current horizons or trajectories.

It is however a costly story, where the cost is experienced throughout. This in different ways, by all the participants.

When they had crossed over
they came to land
at the other side.

The other side is where we are headed—together.

This is the shore we cannot yet see.
It is the shoreline which is not visible to view for much of the journey.
We do however know that it is there, and that the journey is accompanied.

It is not possible, nor appropriate, to predict the outcomes in any specific sense. The journey is hazardous and open ended. However in the narrative selected as a suggestive parable for the purposes of this contribution, the mixed company arrive together. They are intact. They are also changed by the journey, by one another and most truly by Jesus, the Son of God.

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