Narrative of the second *Bible in the Life of the Church*
Steering Group meeting
November 15th – 18th 2010
Salt Rock Hotel, Durban, South Africa

**Participants** were Archbishop David Moxon (Chair); Jonathan Draper (Southern Africa); Dave Allen (Britain); Charles Sherlock (Australia); Kabiro wa Gatumu (East Africa). Clara Ajo Lazaro (Consultant); Ellen Davis (Consultant); Andrew Village (Consultant); Clare Amos (Staff); and Stephen Lyon (Staff).

It was reported that Bishop Michael Fape felt he was no longer the right person to be involved in this project and so has stood himself down. This raised question for the Steering Group about the kind of representation that is now missing. These gaps might be addressed by fuller use of User Groups to test out the material more widely.

The SE Asia Regional Group have now appointed their Regional Coordinator, Jin Huat. The need now is to get the work of this Regional Group off the ground as quickly as possible.

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**The narrative covers 6 main areas and is ordered as followed:**

**Section 1** - Reworking of the hermeneutical insights we have gained from Case Study 1 – what during the meeting we called the ‘gaps’. Followed by the initial notes on the ‘gaps’ discussion

**Section 2** - Outline for Case Study 2

**Section 3** - Planned outcomes from the project as a whole with a note of who is initially taking the lead responsibility.

**Section 4** - Notes and discussion outcomes from Andy Village’s presentation re the possibility of an empirical study

**Section 5** - Notes from the discussions on the regional and other presentations

**Section 6** - Notes on the discussion of the project at the Faith and Order Commission – IASCUFO – Monday November 29th.

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**Section 1 - Case Study 1 – the hermeneutical insights reworked**

From the reports of the Regional groups and the discussion at the Steering Group the following observations can be drawn. These come from a process of teasing out what people are actually doing but also seeking to find a number of bench-marks that might raise the bar of hermeneutics.

The Steering Group wish to address these observations to two groups within the Communion – the first set is to ‘the Church’ – the institution and those who at various levels hold responsibility for its corporate action. The second set is addressed to ‘the Reader’ whoever and wherever s/he might be.
Observations addressed to ‘the Church’

The overarching observation is that the ‘hermeneutical gap’ between the academy and the pew is significant. Possible examples of the way it was seen to manifest itself are:

- There was a difference in understanding between the fruits of study – what the Bible was saying to the reader - and that of the process of study – the hermeneutical tools used to discover these fruits. It was not that these tools were not being used but that they were being employed with little understanding. Are they so much part of the life of the academy that we forget or do not feel the need consciously to explain them?

- There was a gap between those issues/topics etc where the Church gained its understanding from Scripture and those where it relied more heavily (possibly exclusively) on other sources. Our care and concern for the environment is seen as important but, in some places, engaging with the Bible on the topic has not been central in our response. Are there issues/topics where we immediately go to Scripture (and possibly nowhere else) and others we do not?

- There was an observed gap between engaging with a particular passage of Scripture and both allowing that passage to speak to other passages and putting the passage in its larger Biblical context. Are there reasons why the ‘lectionary tradition’ of Anglicanism that brings a number of passages together to speak to one another might not be informing some of our study engagement?

- It was clear from the observations made in the Regional reports that different pedagogical approaches opened up new understandings in the engagement process. Are we fully aware of the richness of different pedagogical approaches to handling the Bible?

- There was an observed difference in the ‘preferred’ hermeneutical horizons brought to Scriptural engagement – that of the writer, the text and the reader. It was also noted that the level of understanding of these different horizons and their effect on the fruits of this engagement was not always clear. Is this an area where more explanation is needed between the academy and the pew?

Observations addressed to ‘the Reader’

The overarching observation is that for ‘Readers’ there is a perceived difference between what we say we do and what we actually do – in more technical language there is a gap between espoused theory and theory in practice. Possible examples of the way it was seen to manifest itself are:

- A view that once we have studied an issue or topic – from a Biblical standpoint – we have that issue or topic ‘sorted’ i.e. further study is unnecessary. Does this contradict the view that the Church is a community of learners continually seeking to grow in our faith?

- Observations in the reports that suggested that we all carry with us lenses through which we engage with Scripture that are no longer helpful to the present but which we do not always recognise. For example, we may draw on insights from previous engagement with a particular passage rather than listening to what
that passage may be saying now. How do we ensure that we can be open to new understanding and draw on previous insights?

- At the more personal 'Reader' level there was also an observed gap between those issues/topics etc where we automatically use Scripture and those where we do not draw on its insights. Is this at odds with a view, often expressed, that the Bible is central to our life as Christians?

- If our engagement with Scripture is both a personal and communal activity then the nature of the community we do the latter with is significant. Does engaging with 'like-minded' people sometimes mean that we are not taken beyond our comfort zone into a place where we might need to go to experience new understandings?

- Observations suggest that we engage with a canon of Scripture within the canon of Scripture. Are there sections of the Bible we never or rarely encounter that limit our understanding of what Scripture might be saying to us?

**Initial notes on the ‘gaps’ discussion**

In general reports give insights into 'what is'. These, however, are critiqued to some degree in each report. From all the reports – in order to raise the bar we need to address/make implicit the implications of the following gaps:

- Gap 1 – between what we say and what we do – espoused theory and theory in practice
- Gap 2 – between ‘once studied’ [sorted] and continual learning
- Gap 3 – between fruits of study and clarity about the process of study. Mechanics and results – hermeneutical methodologies
- Gap 4 – between gaining our insights from Scripture and ‘other sources’
- Gap 5 – that speaks of the relationship between ‘rock from which we are hewn (personally or corporately) and the ‘now’ of our journey and the importance of both
- Gap 6 – between the academy and the pew [scholar/expert and ordinary reader] place of the seminary in this gap.
- Gap 7 – between the particular and the whole as far a Scripture is concerned
- Gap 8 – gaps created by different pedagogical methodologies
- Gap 9 – between issues/topics/understandings where we automatically would use the Scriptures and where we do not draw on its insights
- Gap 10 – between liturgy/life and ‘study’
- Gap 11 – between the different hermeneutical horizons
- Gap 12 – between reading communities
- Gap 13 – between the canon of Scripture and Scripture encountered
- Gap 14 – hermeneutics of trust and that of suspicion.
- Gap 15 – Scripture seen as tangible resource of the Church and consumable item, another version etc.

What do these gaps say to us? Message to the Church and message to the Reader:

Church – over-arching gap 6 manifested in 3, 4, 7, 8 and 11
Reader – overarching gap 1 manifested in 2, 5, 9, 12 and 13

Taken Gap 10 out as it is of a different nature to the others.

Gaps with accompanying bridges – bridging methodologies, prompts, resources. Gaps may well remain but are they all bridgeable? Bridge can also be a meeting place, place of connection. How strong is the methodology to enable a movement forward.
Section 2 - Case Study 2 (CS2)

We did not complete as much work on CS2 in Durban as we did on CS1 in London in November 2009. Further work is needed to produce a document similar to the one we produced for CS1 and Stephen will work on this and circulate it early in the New Year.

The discussion about CS2 gave rise to the following comments:

- Good to limit the topic so that there is concerted energy for it – what do others think of what we are thinking about
- Incorporate into CS2 what we learned from CS1 – so take in 13 gaps and move process on.
- Power and money – possibility for empirical study, CS3
- Usefulness of choosing one of the 5 Marks of Mission – suggestion of CS2 taking Mark 4 - To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- Challenge of getting different groups together to see different perspectives
- Method – people taking both context and text seriously.
- Could take Mark 4 either to look at power & wealth or domestic violence
- Easier to do the hermeneutical work if we are focussed
- Could focus on ‘structures’ and ‘injustice’
- What is difference between CS1 and CS2 – how do we take the learning from first into the second? How do we raise the bar?
- Facilitation is key to raising the bar. E.g. New Zealand – exploring difference and staying together. Give voice to everyone in respectful context with respectful listening. Allows input; guarantees voices to be heard.
- Better to refer to unjust economic structures and unjust gender structures.
  - Wealth, ownership & management
  - Education
  - Family planning
  - Work, distribution & remuneration
  - Physical violence against
  - Exercise of religious authority
- This is what came out of CS1 – we want to explore these then apply them – CS2

What we decided was - Scripture passages for CS2

- **Unjust economic structures** – Deut 15; Ezek 27:1-36 with Rev 18; Psalm 73; Isaiah 58; Luke 6:17-38; Mark 10:17-34; and 1 Cor 11:17-34.

Further discussion in plenary recommended also -

- Ezra 9 & 10 [economic]; Hosea 1 & 3 [gender]; Magnificat [economic]; 2 Sam 13 [gender]; Prov 31:10-31 [gender]; Ruth [gender]
- Topic 4\(^{th}\) Mark, two offered tracks and passages, focus hermeneutical insights.
Section 3 - Outcomes from the Bible project

The Steering group outlined the possible outcomes from the project initially between now and ACC15 in 2012. We suggested a possible strap line - “moving/bridging horizons”

1. **Report document to the ACC** – including resource bank with a CD or DVD?  
   [Stephen to lead with first draft on table at the final Steering Group meeting in May 2012]

2. **DVD** – to go with the ACC report introducing the work of the project in popular way.  
   [Stephen to contact Trinity Wall Street to see if they might be interested in helping with this both technically and financially]

   [Clare to lead and already offered outline and secured a number of authors.]

4. **2012 Anglican Communion Lent Course** – primary thrust on environment and secondary thrust - how we use Bible [Perth producing one for 2011].  
   Using regional material already created in popular form. Sense of engagement – mutual accountability; do something; reflect on the doing; what happened; biblically reflection. Lambeth Conference evening on environment – five regional studies/workshops. Art of Biblical interpretation framework, way we respect and use the Bible. Incorporate booklet on principles in the framework for course. Engage with the text *in the light of* what has come out of particular Regional Groups. Each study displayed good principles of biblical interpretation. “This is what Christians from xxxx thought; what do you think?” Self awareness of what we are doing in relation to the overall thrust of the project.  
   [Clare & Charles to take the lead]

5. **Booklet** – *Introduction to Anglican hermeneutical principles* based on Anglican Communion documents/statements on the Bible. The starting point would be the document already produced by New Zealand offering five principles of hermeneutics. – include 13 gaps and link to this booklet.

User-friendly wording for NZ principles paper – primary sources – the Church and Scripture as well as individuals and Scripture. Two purposes – collection of classic Anglican texts; what has come from these texts (principles)

- Unfolding revelation
- The Bible as a whole
- God’s Word, God’s world
- Interpreting consistently
- Food for living – social and personal – feeding people of God
- The Word in action today – now go and do it!
- In the light of Christ

[Stephen and Clare to pick up work already done by David seek to engage Richard Burridge in this piece of work with Ellen also as consultant.]
6. **Signposts** study course - section on Scripture can members of the Steering Group help with contributing to this?  
*Clare has already started this piece of work and will be seeking help from members of the Steering group.*

7. **Research results** – conversations need to continue with Andy Village in relation to what we might attempt in terms of empirical research and how the findings of these might be made available.  
*Stephen to keep in contact with Andy and seek to take this forward in the light of discussions in Durban*

8. **Methodologies/case studies** – to write up as both part of the main report but also as independent papers what took place in New Zealand, South Africa and Sudan. Other case studies might also emerge through other regional groups.  
*Stephen to write up the case studies from the documentation we already have and send to David, Ellen and Jonathan for redrafting and editing.*

9. **Tools** – a variety of tools, resources etc that emerge from the project produced in electronic form in a consistent format as part of the project. For example:

   - Tools like matrix etc from work of regional groups
   - Brueggemann exercise and SA exercise
   - Bible Society tool
   - Annotated bibliography on Biblical related subjects – academic and popular
   - Articles, papers that benefit from wider circulation
   - Module on Anglican hermeneutics – academic and pew edition?  
     *Gregory Robbins through Dave.*
   - Liturgical material – *[Charles, Rob in London; Charles in Durban, Clare]*
   - Reading the Bible in Church - Carol Service for Easter – why Carol services are so popular? Use final Steering Group with the liturgy in mind. Holy Week tradition used more creatively. Referring to Anglican Prayer books around the world.  
     *Stephen to contact Raewynne Whiteley*
   - Preaching the Word *[Petr Sherlock’s article]*  
     *Stephen to follow these up and seek to draw them together as the tools/resources section of the report, the CD and on the Bible project section of the AC website.*

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**Section 4 – Notes and discussion of Andy Village’s paper**  
*mainly from Andy’s pp slides*

What might it achieve?

- Same text; same fashion
- Collect basic data about Bible belief and practice
- Enable pattern to emerge within and between provinces
- Allow deeper interpretation of Bible study data
What a questionnaire might contain?
- A test passage relevant to the topic
- Questions on the passage measuring horizon separation and preference.
- Scale of measuring Bible beliefs and literalism
- Background information

Issues that would need to be addressed:
- Finding the best passage
- Develop the right items
- Cultural and language translation
- Logistics of distribution

How might it be ministered?
- All clergy sample of dioceses
- Sample of congregations during Sunday worship

Analysis
- Coded locally or sent to York SJ
- Analysis @ YSJU (?)
- Results presented to Steering Group reflected across the Communion.

Issues raised from discussion:
- Differing literacy presents challenges.
- Language used – mode of way questionnaire might operate
- Does it matter if not all Communion is included in such a survey? Would it be helpful for the project if it were not fully Communion wide?
- Suspicion element in a survey like this.
- Horizons questions offered great information and a strategy for those working in a place.
- Feels as it comes from university rather than the Church.
- Collecting data in some places is threatening.
- Offer questionnaire and ask if it is useful – respond in more narrative form.
- Is it best used simply as a tool of understanding (resource) for the project c.f. how the data itself, when analysed, might be used. Can it be used both/and
- Questions relevant for each context.
- Difference between the communal way of expressing truth c.f. with individual.
- What is this about? Example of food offered to idols given as possibility.

Section 5 – Regional and other reports

The first section of the meeting was spent carefully going over the various regional reports the Steering Group had received. They have been circulated in full to members so this narrative will highlight significant comments that emerged from our discussion that inform the future of the project.

Australia – the report gave rise to discussion on the place of the lectionary and its impact on the read word. The question was raised as to whether its use is a hermeneutical choice. The ‘lectionary principle’ is deeply rooted in Anglicanism. [See also comments made within the discussion at IASCUFO.]
North America – a fundamental division over hermeneutics within a mixed theological group was not apparent. So, where is real hermeneutic divide? Academic v faith reading? The Church as a whole needs to hold the whole of understanding of Scripture.

East Africa – raised the question of the influence of the ‘primal’ i.e. that which is basic and foundational, prime in the sense of being ‘there first’ on the way we engage with Scripture now. Is this an area of Scriptural insight that has been neglected? In the East African context has hermeneutics been high jacked by the West looking at Africa and affecting way the Africans are looking at themselves. Polluted by the ‘gaze of the West’. Sense that post enlightenment approach is being questioned as an impediment for reading Scripture as opposed to insights that come from a ‘primal’ viewpoint. Meaning of text cannot be located in one area of scholarship or experience.

Primal understanding – is it helping us see what is in the text or something outside the scope of the text but nevertheless things we need to know [wisdom]? Help people to engage African Traditional Religion and Christianity – how can they help one another? Meaning not located in the text but is produced between the text and the reader. Everyone brings cultural capital to the reading of the text and interacts with the text.

Britain – Headline would be – way groups read reflected their local church community – congregation, academy, midweek mum’s/tots type service. Struggling to find commonalities. Reluctant to put texts in conversation with one another and to be ‘critical’ of the text.

Hermeneutical method not a conscious part of Bible Study – linked to what people see the Bible to be, what is it for them. What is the Bible in terms of those parts most Christians engage with – Gospels, OT stories, pieces of Epistles – is there much more?

Scripture seen as consumer product for individuals rather than the books of the community. Commodifying the Bible. On the ground a great deal of Bible encounter happens cross denominationally. Spiritual consumerism. Put Bible into an ecclesial setting. What does electronic forms of Scripture do for/to people? Return to Scripture as dispersed set of documents?

Southern Africa - Initial suspicion but people enjoyed reading the Bible. The Instruments produced by the Regional Group helped observers to see/understand just how the Bible was being used.

There is in place a process of training trainers so the project can move out into the Province. Process of questions aimed to take people from:

- **Context** [taking people’s cultural capital seriously; opening from the passage that encouraged people to bring it to their own situation]
- **Behind the Text** [give Bible space so the group can encounter the text; offer some insight, question about the text; for the text to work]
- **Text** How does the input help to enable people to understand the text? back to the **Context**.
Doing it communally greatly enriches the text. Creating space ‘enabled’ people to disagree but in context of conversation. Acceptance of diversity, not always taken up or condemned. Non-directive Bible Study. Contextual Bible Study attempting to bring people back to the text itself. What does it mean when you give the text a voice?

Phase 3 of the South African project is aiming at reading the Bible together in facilitated circumstances linking different parishes/groups with different profiles in facilitated Bible studies – ‘reading with other eyes’. Offers meeting ‘around the Bible’, learning from one another. Phase 3 – reading with others eyes takes homogenous groups out of their own comfort zones. Listen to one another-learn from one another.

**Other case studies**

**Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia** offering a model of entering into biblical engagement where there is diversity within a Province that is small and so much more impetus to find a way to ensure that they get on with one another.

The overall process of three gatherings (hui) meant that when, at the third, they came to explore Romans 1 there was enough trust to enable radical disagreement and a realisation that all were taking the Bible seriously. With 1 Cor 6 the differences continued, and deepened and no one changed their mind.

Outcome was healthy - exegesis of 1 Cor 5-7 was seen as ‘reasonable’ by almost all view points. Achieved ‘reasonable unity’. Clear and deliberate facilitation – they reported back on behaviour that seemed to make people more confident in their views than changing their position or viewpoint.

Important that this is not seen ‘romantically’ as work without hurt or misunderstanding. Hermeneutical work done but in the end further decisions might still cause immense hurt or offence. Seen as a kind of controlled explosion.

**Sudan** – this took place in a leadership seminar the core of group being the Principals of the theological colleges in Sudan – 2.5 days, 25 participants from 3 continents [Sudan, USA and Britain]. The seminar dealt with all the texts suggested in Case Study 1 with the exception the Song of Three Young Men. It has a dual focus on hermeneutics and exegesis. There was a high level of engagement.

**Outcomes/responses**

- The subject (Mark of Mission 5) was considered of great importance but it had never been explored theologically/biblically in Sudan.
- Was there a distinctive Sudanese or Anglican way of reading Scripture?
  - contextualised in tribal practices – came from a variety of tribes and so tribal conflict has been significant element in Sudan. Different tribal groupings studying together was a novel experience.
  - contextualised in political and social situation – war, exile, refugee camp etc
  - contextualised in their physical environment, geography e.g. Nile leopard direct threat to people but nearing extinction
  - contextualised canonically – OT/NT, different levels of reading e.g. seed in Genesis 1
- Contextualised liturgically with Eucharist, song (a Sudanese hymn writer was present and their hymns and songs played a vital role in the seminar)

- Happy to be involved with other Anglicans i.e. Communion wide project
- Suspicion of commentaries – western [or African ones out of ‘northern’ influence] ones with presuppositions at odds with a Sudanese theological mindset.
- A wish to persist in this practise of tri-continental way of reading Scripture
- Worth doing? Overwhelming agreement that ‘this kind’ of encounter with Scripture and pedagogical methods are needed in Sudan.

Cuba – the context was important as Cuba is part of Caribbean but is Spanish speaking, a ‘religious people’ but the Episcopal Church not big. The Bible is very important, “without the Bible we are nothing”. Study of the Bible in community with this User Group in a very poor community in Cuba – Episcopal by tradition but practice African religion ‘from the heart’.

Strong contextualisation of the reading of Scripture with parallels with Sudanese contextualisation. Also another example of the South African ‘context-text-context’ giving space for the text to speak. “The main objective is not to interpret the Bible, but to interpret our lives with the aid of the Bible”

Section 6 – Discussion of the project at IASCUFO

Following the meeting in Durban Stephen reported on the project to the Communion’s Faith and Order Commission IASCUFO at its meeting in Cape Town. They gave far more time than had been timetabled as they considered it an important piece of work that they needed to understand.

Stephen led their Bible Study using some of Andy Village’s work on hermeneutical horizons leading to interesting discussion on this aspect of the work. He then outlined where the project had got to and outlined the ‘gaps’ section as well as outlining the approach of Case Study 2.

Their feedback and comments are of interest:

- They spoke a great deal of ‘Biblical illiteracy’ and the need of reviving interest in the Bible. They asked if the project was attempting to address this.
- They commented on the place of the Bible in liturgy and the part played by the lectionary in the life of the Anglican Church. They urged some work on the history of the lectionary and its place in our life.
- A number commented on the importance of their own and others context and what was happening around them in relation to engagement with Scripture.
- One member highlighted the value of Jewish interpretation of Scripture and how this might help us in our task – this led to other comments on the value of understanding the history of interpretation and engagement.
- There were a number of comments on the way our underlying view of the Bible – expressed by one member as the ‘Holy’ Bible – was our starting point and that we then needed to engage in a professional way. One spoke of ‘devotional, Godly reading’ of the Bible. [Comment – reminded me of some of the Sudanese comments on their underlying hermeneutic being fashioned by their understanding of what the Bible is.]
There were various comments around the Bible as something that can unite us as we find, as one member put it ‘the Church in the life of the Bible’.

**Miscellaneous questions in last session**

- Funding questions – next year a further Regional Group grant
- Date of next meeting of Steering Group – May 21-25, 2012 [working days], Woking
- Timetable work in Regional Groups up to end of February 2012 – draw final report together – draft – final Steering Group meeting – publication.
- Reading through other eyes – Hans De Witt – for Reference Group