

## Secretary General's Report

### Introduction

1. I am honoured to present my report to Standing Committee. I took up my appointment from 1 July 2015 reporting to Standing Committee in September after only two months in post. I then reported in Lusaka in April 2016, when I had been in post for nine months. By comparison this report has a different timescale and perspective. It covers a period of seventeen months since Standing Committee and ACC-16 in Lusaka and is written after I have completed two full years in post.
2. This report will touch briefly on subjects and proposals which will be reported under other items on the Standing Committee agenda; they are mentioned here to put them in the context of the overall work and priorities of the ACO. This report will give an overview of the Communion and ACO from my perspective as Secretary General.

### Overview of the Anglican Communion

3. I have the responsibility for understanding and impacting on developments in the Communion across the world and the special privilege of travelling widely and meeting regularly with primates and other leaders. The responsibility is a heavy one; the privilege one which I attempt to serve in a way that best serves the Communion.
4. Like any family, the distinctive feature of the Anglican Communion is the balance between what unites and what divides. We are united by our fellowship and identity in Jesus Christ; we can be divided by our different circumstances, different cultures and different priorities. It is part of my personal mission to encourage all to celebrate our unity and to seek to understand and overcome any differences. My prayer is that this mission would be accepted and adopted by all leaders across the Communion, and it is a sadness and concern that some appear to seek division and to form factions interested in expressing only their own view and to gaining power and influence to dominate other opinions.
5. I am saddened that there is arrogance within some areas of the Communion where some Anglicans claim that they are *the* Church, and are the true custodians of the undiluted Gospel, with the implication that the others have lost it. By rejecting other Anglicans, they do precisely what St Paul says Christians cannot say to one another: "I have no need of you" (1 Corinthians 12:21).
6. The fallout from this particular attitude has created hardships in those very regions of the global South, who have said in effect to other parts of the Anglican Communion "we don't need you!" When such a rejection of another Anglican province means refusing support in the work of relief and development, Anglicans and other in these regions suffer. I am further saddened: what does it mean when within the same family, we cannot receive from one another a blessing because of ecclesiological and theological differences?
7. I recommend that the Anglican Communion Office facilitates a series of intra- and inter-provincial visits, so that Anglicans meet and learn from one another, engage and support one another in mission, and attend each other's synods as observers. Mutual understanding should result, especially as we see how authority is exercised.

8. My vision is to reshape our Communion. We have to change in terms of representation, partnership and mission. I foresee a Communion in which:
- we will grow spiritually as well as numerically;
  - there will be a growing recognition of our cultural differences;
  - diversity will be respected;
  - we will be proud to be Anglican.

### **Education and understanding in the Communion**

9. As I have travelled around the Communion I have been surprised by the limited knowledge of Anglicanism. The majority of Anglicans in the global South - bishops, clergy and laity - have limited understanding of the nature of the Communion, or the Anglican understanding of what the Church is. The next phase of my work as Secretary General will be to promote awareness of the different cultural contexts present within the Communion, including churchmanship, our various senses of being church, our diverse understandings and uses of authority. It includes different understandings of what it means to be a bishop or an archbishop.
10. This discovery has underlined for me the importance of theological education and the need to invest to improve the training given to those called to full time ministry. The funding secured to create a post as Director for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion is therefore most important and next stage of this work over five years should lead to mapping existing resources, sharing good practice and raising of standards in theological education across the Communion.

### **The key position of the Church of England in the Anglican Communion**

11. The political and ecclesiological pressures within the Communion result in intense scrutiny on developments within the Church of England and particularly on the statements and activity of the Archbishop of Canterbury. There is particular scrutiny of any developments around church polity towards human sexuality and how these are responded to.
12. Being based in London and working with colleagues at Lambeth Palace and the Church of England's national offices gives the opportunity to work with the leadership in both to ensure that consideration of wider Communion reaction is considered in all statements and developments.
13. My close working relationship with the Archbishop of Canterbury is critical and I am grateful to Archbishop Justin for the commitment to ensure that we walk closely together in all Communion matters. In addition to regular informal contact that arises within the worshipping and office community at Lambeth Palace, I meet monthly with the Archbishop of Canterbury, where we are also joined in conference call by the ACC Chairman.
14. I gave an address to the General Synod of the Church of England, stressing the importance that the England has within the Communion, and how its actions are perceived around the world.
15. I want to say a further word about the Archbishop of Canterbury. In his person, Archbishop Justin demonstrates what it means to be gracious; he is a living sign of what it means to be a Spirit-filled Christian. His patience and humility are a true witness. I have also seen the grace of the Lord at work in Anglican provinces that were at odds with the rest of the Anglican Communion, but were reconciled by the personal ministry of the Archbishop Justin.

### **Growth**

16. Despite the disproportionate amount of time being spent in discussing human sexuality, our prime calling is to proclaim Jesus and his world-wide mission.

17. I have myself examples of new outreach in a wide range of contexts. In Dallas, for example, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry took part in a conference to promote new ways of evangelising; churches are being planted in new neighbourhoods there even before people move in. I attended a weeklong conference in Connecticut on mission and evangelism. In South-East Asia churches are being planted to respond to the needs of the people. In Kenya, the primate has made it clear that he is not interested in a divided church, but will concentrate on development in rural and urban areas and on reaching out to Muslim neighbours.

### **Visits around the Communion**

18. In the two years since my appointment in 2015, I have accepted invitations to participate in Synods, services, consecrations and meetings in Canada, England, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, Iran, Irish Republic, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Norway, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, and USA. I am encouraged by the vigour and variety of Anglicanism everywhere and am grateful for the hospitality shown to me.
19. A highlight of my role is the privilege of attending Provincial Synods. In this ambassadorial role I have had first hand experience of churches acting and making decisions synodically. The synodical process is fascinating and exciting. I wish that all provinces would adopt the synodical process to ensure that the wisdom and contribution of all bishops and all believers can influence decision-making for these provinces.
20. In parts of Africa and South-East Asia I have witnessed primates eschewing doctrinal disputes in order to concentrate on the need to relieve poverty, and to challenge bad governance, corruption, ignorance and Islamic extremism. I think especially of two new primates, the Archbishop of Jackson of Kenya and the Archbishop Moon Hing of South East Asia.

### **The new province of Sudan**

21. A particular highlight for me has been the creation of the new province of Sudan. The circumstances in Sudan remind me of my home in northern Nigeria where Christians are a minority within a Muslim majority. Within Sudan, unlike South Sudan, that means that Anglicans will have to change their approach to Islam; they need to earn the respect of their Muslim neighbours. This change in approach to Muslims must lead the two communities into dialogue with one another. To step into the world of your neighbour without losing your own identity is one of the greatest gifts of inter-religious dialogue. I think that the new province of Sudan has begun with this healthy approach.
22. Beyond Sudan, I welcome the possibility of Chile becoming a province in South America. The growth of the church in Chile is the result of active growth, evangelism, church planting. I look forward to visiting the three proposed dioceses later this year to see for myself what is going on.
23. The successful companion relationships between linked dioceses and twinned churches are often unsung, but mutually beneficial. I think, for example, of the link between the Anglican Church of Kenya and The Episcopal Church.

### **Lambeth Conference 2020**

24. Much of the collective attention of the Communion in the next three years will be working towards the Lambeth Conference 2020. Since 1867 Lambeth Conferences have been key opportunities for all Anglican bishops to meet together for fellowship and study, developing understanding of the role of bishops and making decisions that have important milestones in the development of the Communion.

25. I am looking forward to working further with the Lambeth Design Group, chaired by Archbishop Thabo of Cape Town and with members from across the Communion. The design for the Conference is not something that emerges from Lambeth Palace or from England. Rather it is very much the construction of the wider Communion, through the work of the Design Group and through wide consultations including regional meetings of primates and bishops planned for the next two years.
26. At the Lambeth Conference, the bishops represent their local churches, bringing with them their good news as well as their headaches, and being upheld by prayers from around the world. They meet as colleagues to discern what the Lord is saying to his people, through the study of the Word and in waiting and sharing together. The Conference carries a lofty moral authority, which is not legally binding on the provinces since they are autonomous, but when it speaks in a formal resolution, the whole Christian world, not just the Anglican Communion, should listen.

### **Primates' Meeting and Task Force**

27. Following the primates' Meeting in January 2016, a primates' Task Group was formed to help the Communion walk together despite differences. Through two meetings the Task Group has already improved our openness to one another, especially when considering authority. The bishops, clergy and lay members of the Group have come to recognise that the Anglican Communion is very diverse in terms of culture, ecclesiology and polity. The Task Group will report to a further meeting of primates called by the Archbishop of Canterbury to meet in October 2017. The ACO will provide the administrative support required.
28. A pilgrimage to the Holy Land in June 2017 enabled primates, bishops, Provincial Secretaries and others to experience walking together in reality, following in the footsteps of Jesus. It was my privilege to join in this pilgrimage, which could become an annual opportunity for leaders from around the Communion to physically walk together.

### **The roles of meetings within the Instruments of Communion**

29. The technical position is well understood. The ACC is the one Instrument of Communion that has a constitution and has formal decision-making authority and mechanisms, although some practical responsibilities are delegated to Standing Committee. The ACC is a synod, because the three houses of laity, clergy and bishops are represented.
30. I would like to start a debate about the moral weight of ACC-16 resolutions and those which will emanate from the Lambeth Conference. Within Anglicanism, the ACC has enormous authority and, like the Lambeth Conference, its resolutions can carry moral weight. There should be scope for these to be discussed at diocesan level, rather than subject to provincial filtering, so that bishops, priests and laity can see that ACC resolutions can lead to action at grass roots level.
31. We face the responsibility to ensure that the various meetings of the Instruments of Communion function in a way which is clear, is honouring to God and meets the needs of the Communion. I believe there is merit in considering whether changes are required in any of these areas:
  - the respective authority of the ACC and the primates' Meeting, to answer the question of where practical authority lies;
  - whether representation of provinces through voting members of ACC can continue for provinces who make no contribution to the Inter-Anglican budget;

- Whether it may be appropriate for provinces to ensure that their representation on ACC should include a range of ecclesiological positions that represents the breadth of opinion within their province, with the possibility that minimum representation might be increased to two members per province.

### **Inter Faith Relations**

32. Standing Committee knows that much of my ministry has been devoted to developing understanding and a culture of respect between Christians and Muslims, particularly on the ground in the northern part of Nigeria. In a world in which religious difference is seen as a cause of international disagreement and conflict, pursuing improved inter faith relations is an imperative. I welcome the ACC-16 resolution to establish an Anglican Inter Faith Commission. Action is now being taken to establish the Commission and I hope that it can be formally launched at the primates' Meeting in October, with a first meeting due early in 2018.

### **External representation**

33. An important component of the role of Secretary General is to represent the Communion in official roles and to outside bodies. My experience is that these engagements are enriching to me personally as well as providing an opportunity to explain and promote the Communion. During the two years the bodies on which I have an official role have included:
- Anglican Centre in Rome (Governor)
  - Compass Rose Society (Board member)
  - Crown Nominations Commission of the Church of England (member of theological working party – to provide a wider Communion perspective)
  - Lambeth Conference Company (Trustee)
  - The Archbishop of Canterbury's Anglican Communion Fund
  - The Friends of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Anglican Communion Fund
34. The Anglican participation in ecumenical dialogue is led by the Unity, Faith and Order department within the ACO and with the engagement of Primates, theologians and others from the Communion. It is my privilege to be involved in representation to other Christian denominations, including:
- Anglican-Lutheran-Buddhist consultation in Myanmar
  - Christian (Catholic and Anglican) and Muslim Leaders Summit (Tehran)
  - Informal talks with the Lutheran World Federation

### **Staff and Financial Matters**

35. I am consistently impressed by the dedication, commitment and skill of the staff at the ACO. Supporting the Instruments of Communion is a substantial task, particularly given the increase in frequency of meetings of primates and in the build up to the Lambeth Conference 2020. In addition to work to support the Instruments, the ACO staff lead the work streams that develop from decisions made by those Instruments, including interdenominational dialogues, initiatives in mission, social justice, safeguarding and much else.
36. It has become increasingly clear to me that my role as Secretary General has to have an external focus, with significant representation and visiting internationally. As a consequence it has been important to strengthen the staff team with the appointment of a Chief Operating Officer. David White joined the ACO in March 2017. From his NGO leadership background David is able to give attention to improving office function, effectiveness and impact, of which more will be seen in other papers presented to Standing Committee in the areas of governance, finance and HR.

37. The staff team at St Andrew's House remains small, but faced with an ever growing workload. It is important the tasks to be undertaken are addressed properly and it is likely that some additional staffing will be required to achieve this, again particularly in the build up to the Lambeth Conference 2020. Senior staff leading major areas of work currently have very limited research and administrative support. Funding for additional staffing will be sought externally rather than assuming that it can be secured through provincial financial contributions.
38. ACO income is dominated by provincial contributions and all involved in giving to the important work of the Communion are to be thanked. However, there is a heavy reliance on a small number of provinces to provide most of the income: 67% comes from two provinces, 94% comes from 10 provinces. Many provinces make no contribution at all and the reasons for this appear to have more to do with polity than affordability. A presentation will be made to the Inter-Anglican Finance and Audit Committee recommending a way forward; this will come in turn to Standing Committee and the ACC for consideration.
39. Budgeting for 2018 will be developed during the autumn and brought to the IAFAC and Standing Committee for approval through a conference call in January 2018.

The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon  
Secretary General