



ACC17/01/EN

ACC 17 – Transcript of Presidential Address given on 28 April 2019

Introduction

Thank you very much for that Bible study and thank you so much to those who led it. It is a wonderful way to move forward in this day. I want to begin with...although I did not know which bit we were doing today in the bible study when I wrote this...some words within the words that we just looked at

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32). In Easter joy, with Alléluias, the intention of this week is that we meet with God through Jesus Christ and that we leave with clearer vision.

We do not meet for ourselves, but in God’s service. It is to that end that you have all so generously travelled so far, often with much difficulty, even with risk. It is to that end that this wonderful Province and our Chair, its Archbishop have been so generous, and worked so hard, as have so many other people in the ACO and beyond. To them we are all deeply grateful. We welcome warmly all, especially those here for the first time and most of all the advent of youth members. You are particularly welcome.

The Anglican Communion does not exist for itself. It exists primarily to serve God’s mission in God’s world. As William Temple the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942-1944 and Archbishop of York for 18 years before that said, the church exists for those [who are] not its members. The spreading of the good news of Jesus is the greatest gift we can offer the world and the source of unhindered joy. As a result of historic commitment we meet as the

most remarkably diverse group, with Provinces containing up to 2,000 languages and a similar number of cultures. The miracle of the Communion is that through the work of Jesus Christ alone we are made one by the grace of God alone, not by our choice or our selection. For that reason our unity is a call of obedience in Christ. Through unity the beauty of the Communion is increased and is a blessing to the world, and our unity will draw us towards the unity of the whole Church, through which alone the world sees the truth of Christ.

Every province in the Anglican Communion is both autonomous and inter-dependent. We know that what one of us does, affects us all. We have the autonomous right to make choices province by province, to be present or to be absent, but being inter-dependent means, we should limit that right out of love for one another.

Intentional Discipleship

ACC-16, called for 'every province, diocese and parish in the Anglican Communion to adopt a clear focus on intentional discipleship and to produce resources to equip and enable the whole church to be effective in making new disciples of Jesus Christ.' It is my profound hope and prayer that this year, meeting under the theme 'Equipping God's People: Going Deeper in Intentional Discipleship', the second time we have focused on intentional discipleship, we will have the opportunity to reflect on walking together in our life as the Body of Christ and living as witnesses to the glory of God.

Being intentional in our discipleship is, and always has been, at the heart of what it means to be an Anglican. Our roots go back to Pope Gregory the Great sending St Augustine of Canterbury to England in 597 AD. That was an act of discipleship and disciple-making. It was intentional in the modern jargon. Discipleship is not an optional extra to the Anglican life, it is rather is a Jesus-shaped life.

Anglicans are not alone in this emphasis on intentional discipleship. Pope Francis has spoken of the calling to be 'missionary disciples'. He has said, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, that 'Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Jesus Christ: we no longer say that we are 'disciples' or missionaries', but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples'" (*paraphrased*). If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully. In a different context, The World Council of Churches and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism have focused on 'discipleship that transforms'.

God invites us not only to unburden ourselves of our own sin and suffering, but in His grace constrains us to extend the experience of his love to others. That is not even the end of it – we do not have to do it alone. Jesus is with us always, as he promises, even 'to the very end of the age'. We, as individuals, as parishes, as dioceses, as the Church, are offered the chance to be so suffused with the grace of God and love of Christ that it spills into every corner of the earth, a light in the darkness of a hurting world and a promise of eternal hope.

The example of Jesus challenges us to love and serve one another, in the promise that 'the last shall be first and the first shall be last'. It is something that Archbishops need to remember, particularly if they are called first among equals- so that means last among unequals. He inspires us, Jesus inspires us to care for the marginalized, and to see the face of Christ in the suffering. He compels us to be peacemakers in our communities, and to love our enemies. When I look at the millions of Anglicans around the world, serving faithfully as disciples of Christ in Communion with each other, and the wonderful miraculous work that they do, I cannot help but see God's great plan at work in the world.

That was illustrated two weeks ago at the Vatican. For several years the South Sudanese Council of Churches has worked at peace building in a war in their own country a civil war that has cost over 400,000 lives; a forgotten war, not fashionable in the press, forgotten and 2.5 million refugees. From Lambeth, from CAPA, the Association of province in Africa, from elsewhere, groups have gone to support them. Two Women on the Front-Line visits have supported Bishops' wives, you will hear more about that tomorrow- humbly affirming to them that they are called and valued. The use of gender based violence in that war against women in particular and children has been beyond description. At the suggestion of the council of Churches, SSCC the Pope and I invited the political leaders for a spiritual retreat at the Vatican, along with a former Moderator of the Church of Scotland. For the first time since the Reformation Reformed, Anglican and Catholic Church leaders came together. The day, the Thursday before Palm Sunday ended powerfully with a commitment to implementing the 2018 peace agreement negotiated by political leaders the previous year. There is far to go, I have no doubt that the political leaders that came when they returned found their advisers saying 'No you don't want to do that'. I have no doubt that many will seek to destroy the peace agreement. But this work is led locally by the SSCC with the extraordinary example of our own Archbishop Justin Badi, with courage, decision and inspiration and the bishops of the Anglican Church in the South Sudan . It was led locally but supported globally by the Communion. And that is what our unity brings. Without our unity that could not happen.

We cannot condemn whole nations to absence of help, neglect of support, solitary suffering through indulging in the luxury of disunity. We cannot abandon the victims of such wars, neglect the persecuted, forget the poor, ignore climate change, fail to preach the gospel with the intention of making disciples, because we think our issues more important. We

exist for others, in the service of the Prince of Peace. 'Blessed are the peacemakers', says Jesus in Matthew 5:9, 'for they will be called the children of God'.

The Instruments of Communion and the ACC

To facilitate the united work of the Anglican Communion, the Instruments of Communion play a crucial role in providing structure and support. The Instruments of Communion are living, active and unfinished. The excellent report 'Towards a Symphony of Instruments', prepared by the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order, that trips off the tongue doesn't it, IASCUFO if you want a short hand and can remember it but in a wonderful report with a better title, 'Towards a Symphony of Instruments' majestically laid out a plan to ensure that the Instruments conform to their definition and fulfil their roles harmoniously.

We all know that there are four Instruments of Communion, all of which are unusually, happily coinciding in the next couple of years. We are attending one of them at this moment, the Anglican Consultative Council. We have a Primates Meeting in less than a year-next year. The Lambeth 2020 Conference is under eighteen months away. Good things come in threes, as we say in the UK. but in this occasion unfortunately there is a fourth. I may look like a man who is getting a little heavy as he gets older but don't be fooled, I am actually a thing, an Instrument of Communion wearing a dog collar.

Among the Instruments, the ACC is unique in that it has a legal constitution as a charity under English law. The way in which the ecumenical documents are now going to be brought to the ACC for both ratification and for onward reception by the wider Anglican Church is one example of the way in which the ACC can and must become more significant in both holding together the Communion and also in finding ways to encourage the

Communion to live its life together. The ACC, the only body with lay and priestly membership as well as episcopal membership, will continue to take forward the programmatic work of the Communion whilst maintaining its own distinct features of independence.

The world in which we live

But our discipleship, as I have said twice already is not about us, but about our existence in the world as followers of Jesus Christ. We live in dangerous times, for some countries it is always dangerous times but the dangers are spreading in which the possibility of a breakdown of the rule-based order that has governed the world since 1945 looms large, and populism is rising across the global North, with isolation in its wake, while climate change grows more and more dangerous to the whole planet, a true horseman of the Apocalypse, but it is in these times that the Anglican Communion has the potential not only to be a place of refuge and stability in the world, but a place of transformation, a place where self-interest is converted into service, where fear is transformed into faith and where enmity and injustice becomes the love and mercy of the Lord.

On a visit to Fiji over a year ago for the Regional Primates' Meeting of the Oceania Region, I saw how climate change has already begun to impact the lives of local people. One of them told me and these are words I will never forget 'For you Europeans, climate change is a problem for the future. For us it is a problem of everyday survival.' We are tasked with being stewards of God's world – we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, but we borrow it from our children, as the saying goes.

On that same visit to Fiji, I sat with Archbishop Philip Freier and Archbishop Allan Migi. Archbishop Philip lives in Melbourne, a very wealthy city on the whole at least relative to

much of the world, and ++Allan lives near Port Moresby. It could not be more different. The two spoke of the problems they faced in their Provinces. In Australia, ++Philip was concerned about increasing secularization. In Papua New Guinea, ++Allan spoke of the burning of people accused of witchcraft. Sometimes, the issues we face could not be more different, but the beauty of the Communion in service is that it breaks down the barriers that divide us and brings us together to find common solutions. Our diversity is an asset, our common humanity in Jesus Christ a gift.

One of my predecessors, Michael Ramsey, Archbishop in the 60's and early 70's said this "that the Church's 'greater vindication lies in pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment...it is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as 'the best type of Christianity', but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died'

So in conclusion, The Anglican Communion is everywhere. We are diverse, we disagree, but although we are many, we are one body in Jesus Christ – none better, none worse, all of us sinners and disciples known and loved by God.

This is God's Church and we should always beware the ever present temptation to believe we can create the church in the image we want the French writer and philosopher of the 18th century Voltaire using the gender based language of his day said "God made man in his own image and man has returned the compliment by making God in man's own image".

Our discipleship, especially during this Easter, season reminds us day by day that we are called to turn to the Christ who walks with us on the road and every day commit ourselves to be obedient to Him.

As part of God's church, as disciples of Christ, as those who strive to be intentional in our following we can and should rejoice day by day at being part of the wonder that is God's church, messy, contrary, argumentative, but ultimately God's, to do God's work in God's world. Thank you very much.