

ACC-15 - Continuing Indaba

The aim of *Continuing Indaba* is that bishops, clergy and laity across the Anglican Communion will be enabled to consciously make the same commitment as the Primates:

*In our common life in Christ we are passionately committed to journeying together in honest conversation. In faith, hope, and love we seek to build our Communion and further the reign of God.*¹

What have we done?

The journey begins with a route map. We gathered groups of theologians in hubs in Kenya, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Barbados, South Africa, the USA, England and Tanzania and asked them to explore the Scriptures from the perspective of their own culture in order to develop a theological guide for *Indaba* in the Anglican Communion.

From this we developed a model process and invited participation from 12 dioceses in four 'Pilot Conversations.' Each Pilot Conversation involved three dioceses. The dioceses were selected in line with criteria for evaluation and involved bishops who had experienced *Indaba* at the Lambeth Conference and were excited by the prospect of continuation, bishops who had expressed an active dislike of the Lambeth Conference *Indaba* and bishops who had not been present.

The process was:

1. The Diocesan Bishops met to establish their relationships and to set out their own key issues.
2. Link People, appointed by each bishop, met and agreed selection criteria for teams of eight.
3. The team members engaged in three encounters. They took part in a common journey of pilgrimage, framed by common worship and Bible study, visiting each diocese. They established deep relationships and recognised Christ in one another.
4. The teams entered into a three day facilitated conversation where genuine difference was encountered.
5. The teams returned to their dioceses and reflected on the experience to engage in mission action.

What was the result?

The project was professionally evaluated to assess the effectiveness of the *Indaba* model by sociologists of religion from the USA, Tanzania and England. The aim was to learn which aspects might have value for the future of the Anglican Communion. Their findings show *Indaba* to be very effective in developing authentic mutual listening and deeper overall understanding across

¹ Dublin Primates Meeting, January 2011

dioceses, as well as better understanding of how Anglican faith and mission are lived in different cultural contexts.

The *Continuing Indaba* model made possible a richer engagement in mutual mission, strengthening personal and cross-diocesan relationships, developing deeper understanding and the ability to remain in conversation, especially where differences were sensitive and significant. From the evaluation survey data, about 75 per cent of participants claimed to have experienced a shift in their understanding, even where views remained unchanged; something that helps people walk together despite their differences.

Participants did not report that they became more 'liberal' or more 'conservative'. They reported that are being challenged to be more Christ-like, to get on with mission and to discover more of the wonders of being a follower of Christ on a journey with others.

Persistent obstacles to mutual listening remain and this includes the complexity of communicating about profound truths in a language not used with equal ease by all participants, and maintaining an ethos of openness across differences.

The evaluation concludes with a strong, positive recommendation to continue refining *Indaba*, beyond the inevitable practical difficulties, frustrations and learning points of a pilot, as an important tool for moving forward together as a 21st century Anglican Communion.

Impact

The impact of participation in *Continuing Indaba* went far beyond any expectation. Existing and ongoing relationships were strengthened and new relationships forged, but what took us by surprise was the excitement generated in clergy and laity as well as bishops for the potential *Continuing Indaba* had for their context. Many echoed the words of the conversation in Kenya between three African dioceses² – that *Indaba* was a new way of being church.

In Mbeere the *Continuing Indaba* model was used to transform a long standing and deep conflict in the region. In addition, the Archbishop of Kenya used a *Baraza/Indaba* of bishops of the province to develop a workable programme to develop positive relationships between ethnic groups in the nation in run up to political elections.

Theologians of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui became excited by the link between the first principles of *Continuing Indaba* and the Chinese concepts of harmony that they identified in Scripture and so used the model for a Youth *Indaba*. The potential for overcoming youth alienation was also identified in the Diocese of Saldanha Bay in South Africa and the dioceses of Derby (England) and New York (TEC) are actively exploring using *Indaba* in their consultative processes as they seek to respond to locally significant issues. Many of those who have participated in *Continuing Indaba* have discovered a model can apply to global and local contexts.

² There were four pilot conversations across the Communion. One was between three African dioceses, Saldanha Bay in South Africa, Ho in Ghana and Mbeere in Kenya. For more information on the dioceses involved in the Pilot Conversations see <http://continuingindaba.com/report/conversations/>

Continuing Indaba offers hope to the Anglican Communion

Continuing Indaba is not a quick fix for difficult problems, it takes time and energy. It requires commitment to Christ and to one another in his body. It does not minimise differences, rather it emphasises the Lordship of Christ and places trust in his ability to reconcile all things to himself.³

The Pilot Conversations show that we can walk together, recognize Christ in each other, and undertake mutual mission together even though we have strong differences.

The hope is that the Anglican Communion will be able to find a renewed vision for mission, both local and global, by following biblical ways to transform conflict.

More

Thank you for taking the time to read our short paper on *Continuing Indaba*. You can find much more information and our full progress report on our website www.continuingindaba.com

³ Colossians 1:18-20