

**Speech by the Right Revd Anthony Poggo
Secretary General of the Anglican Communion
To the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada**

**Calgary, Alberta
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As delivered

Introductory remarks by the Most Revd Linda Nicholls, Archbishop of Canada:

We are very mindful at this time of Bishop Anthony Poggo's visit with us of the tragic civil war in his home country of South Sudan. Since 2013, Bishop Poggo has been an active leader with the Primate and House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan in calling for peace and an end to taking up arms, and to respect the sanctity of human life and all of creation.

The current Primate of South Sudan, Archbishop Justin Badi Arama, has reminded the peace partners in government of the need to implement all aspects of the revitalised peace agreement. He invites us all to "please pray for peace in South Sudan as well as an end to the ongoing conflict in Sudan."

We will receive a resolution later in this gathering calling for prayer, support and an end to this tragic conflict there. So we are very grateful to have Anthony with us. He previously served on the Archbishop of Canterbury's staff at Lambeth Palace and, on the retirement of Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, Anthony was chosen as the next Secretary General of the Anglican Communion.

It has been a great delight to work with him closely on the Standing Committee and on other Committees, and so, Anthony, we invite you to come forward and speak to us now.

Speech by the Right Revd Anthony Poggo, Secretary General of the Anglican Communion:

Thank you very much. It is a great privilege to address you all today, as we gather for this General Synod of the Anglican Church in Canada. I would like to thank Archbishop Linda for the invitation to be here.

It is wonderful to have this time of fellowship together. It has been good to meet many, many new friends and also people who I have met before in various other fora. I want to commend the importance of this ecumenical relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and Anglicans in Canada, which is an example to the whole Communion.

I have been privileged to have had the opportunity to visit your province in the past. I remember my most recent visit to Canada very fondly, where I was in Toronto for the Regional Primates' Meeting in 2018 ahead of the Lambeth Conference, which was meant to have happened in 2020, but because of Covid it was delayed.

This is my first visit as Secretary General of the Anglican Communion. Since taking up my role it has been a priority for me to build upon my current understanding of each Province and I look forward to the fellowship we will be having together this week.

The Anglican Church of Canada and its members, First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, is one of the 42 autonomous yet interdependent provinces in the Anglican Communion and is a very valued member. We are a Communion that spans over 165 countries with an estimated membership of 86 million people, consisting of different languages, cultures, contexts, challenges, and expectations. Of course, we also remember the last Anglican Congress, which met in Toronto in 1963. At that meeting, the whole Anglican Communion committed itself to, I quote, “mutual responsibility and interdependence.” That high standard is a calling from God that we all should cherish and seek to cultivate: a deep common concern for one another, and a concern for our unity of faith and life.

It was good to have your three ACC members, Marnie, Anita, and Bishop Riscylla [the Revd Marnie Peterson, Dr Anita Gittens and Bishop Riscylla Shaw], at ACC with us in Ghana in February. I am pleased to see that further members from the Anglican Church in Canada have key roles on various networks and commissions, as Archbishop Linda referred to earlier. I cannot name them all of them but wish to express my gratitude for your faithful service to the Communion.

I would however particularly like to thank Archbishop Linda who, among other things, is on the Primates’ Standing Committee. Thank you very much for all you do for the Communion. You are representing the Americas region. This Americas region covers the Provinces of Canada, the Episcopal Church, Mexico, the West Indies, Central America, South America, Chile and Brazil. Thank you for your dedication to the Communion.

I’d also like to thank the Venerable Paul Feheley, who has been a key member of the Communications team for several Lambeth Conferences and ACC meetings and continues to provide words of wisdom to our Comms team.

I would to firstly address where things currently stand in the Communion, and then I will speak briefly on the theme of your Synod: “Let there be Greening”.

As you know, the Anglican Communion Office serves and supports the Communion and all of the 42 provinces equally. We do not see ourselves as the headquarters of the Anglican Communion. We see the ACO as serving the four Instruments of Communion, and their role is to promote the unity and purposes of the Churches of the Anglican Communion in mission, evangelism, ecumenical relations, communication, administration and finance. What we do, is that we play a facilitative role, rather than one of implementing programmes. You could say that the Anglican Communion Office is the grease that oils the wheels of the Instruments of Communion.

Let me take the opportunity to thank you as a province for the financial support that you have given, through your provincial contributions to the Anglican Communion budget.

The Instruments of the Communion have indicated readiness for changes in the structures of the Communion, something which you may have heard recently. There is a need for this review. Some would like us to maintain the status quo, while others would like changes to be made outside of the existing structures. My view is that doing nothing is not an option. However, any changes to the current instruments, to our structures, should only be undertaken through and within the existing structures of the Anglican Communion, not by any other avenues.

As Anglicans, we are people of order, and so we follow and respect our existing structures, including the Constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council.

If I may, I would like to share more details on the proposed initiatives for changes of the structures in the four Instruments of the Communion.

Firstly, the Anglican Consultative Council: the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order, known as IASCUFO, was asked to “explore issues of structure and decision making in the Anglican Communion, as central to our call to be one”. The Anglican Consultative Council in Ghana earlier this year approved this initiative and will be presenting their initial reports early next year. One of your bishops [the Right Revd Joey Royal, Suffragan Bishop in the Diocese of the Arctic] is a member of IASCUFO, as we heard earlier.

Secondly, the Primates’ Meeting: The 2016 Primates’ Meeting requested a task group to maintain conversation among themselves with the intention of restoration of relationship, the rebuilding of mutual trust, healing the legacy of hurt, recognising the extent of our commonality and exploring the deep differences, ensuring they are held between the Primates in the love and grace of Christ.

Coming out of that group, the Standing Committee and the Primates established a subsequent working group to focus on Strengthening of the Standing Committee – in order to look at how the different Instruments can work better together. This group has met several times and has been updating the primates and Standing Committee on the progress of their work. And I am sure that they will continue to do so and give their report at the November meeting of Standing Committee and also at the planned Primates meeting in April next year

Thirdly, we heard earlier of the Lambeth Conference: One of the things that came out of the Lambeth Conference was a Lambeth Call on Anglican Identity. In Phase Three we are hoping that there will be an indication of what needs to be done in terms of a conversation on Anglican Identity.

The fourth Instrument of the Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury: Justin Welby himself said in Ghana recently that he welcomes a review of the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He said he has heard the concerns expressed around the globe and believes changes in his role within the Communion could be helpful, as long as they are agreed and are done through the existing instruments. He reiterated that in a conversation I had with him recently. What he is saying is that this process is one that should be undertaken within the existing Instruments of the Communion.

And so, as we move forward as a Communion, let us also consider our contexts. Let us acknowledge and respect the different contexts of the Anglican Communion. On the issues that we disagree on, it is important that we moderate our language and not be judgemental in our response. Such respect needs to be extended to those who we do not agree with within our own provinces, dioceses or regions.

As we move forward as a Communion, let us consider our contexts and what we would like the future of the Anglican Communion to be. Through the existing structures sustainable changes can and should be made.

Let me turn now to the importance of safeguarding creation, highlighted by the theme of this Synod, “Let there be Greening”.

We are all acutely aware of the climate crisis and how the integrity of creation is under threat. Despite all the horrifying news, there are many good and encouraging stories from around the Communion responding to the environmental crisis, and ways people are living out the Anglican Communion's Fifth Mark of Mission, which is "Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth".

To name just a few: Anglican churches are engaged in reforestation initiatives to help mitigate climate change in some places such as Kenya and the Philippines and defending forests in others such as Brazil and the Solomon Islands. Across the whole Anglican Communion, churches are engaged in building resilience to disasters and are often amongst the first responders whenever disasters hit. As the Church, let's continue to be the change that we want to see.

I recently signed the Fossil Fuel Non-proliferation Treaty on behalf of the Anglican Consultative Council, joining with other faith leaders to call for a global treaty to phase out fossil fuels and support a just transition powered by clean energy and a sustainable future for all. This was a resolution approved by members at ACC-18, but I would like to encourage Anglican primates and bishops to also add their signature on behalf of the Churches and dioceses of the Communion and urge their governments to do what they can to halt new gas and oil exploration.

In your own province, it is commendable that the Church of Canada is leading on net zero carbon Churches. The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund is doing extraordinary work on a range of disaster responses and on issues of Indigenous Peoples and protection of the environment. I am deeply grateful that they were a founding member of the Anglican Alliance and have supported its work consistently over the past 12 years. Thank you to all of you who support generously the work of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

I also understand that some of your dioceses have already been taking forward the Communion Forest initiative that was launched at the Lambeth Conference last year as one of the legacies of the conference. The aim of the Communion Forest initiative is to significantly invest in tree planting and ecosystem conservation, protection and restoration activities around the world. These efforts mark a practical, spiritual and symbolic response to the climate crisis. I want to applaud your wisdom on the use of land and creation as a gift and the way your province has embraced the Lambeth Call on the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Another thing that came out of the Lambeth Conference was the need to review or revive Companion Links between dioceses. At the Lambeth Conference, 178 bishops expressed interest in establishing companion relationships with other dioceses. I hope that diocesan bishops in this province without such links would take that forward and I would be very pleased if you indicated your willingness to my office to do so.

We are all also mindful of the importance of safeguarding of all people in the work we do and the way we work. I know that Canada is looking at incorporating a trauma informed approach to its work on safeguarding. This is encouraging.

We have been concerned by the wild fires that are spreading across the length of your country. I am aware that, in total, an area five times larger than the Greater Toronto Area has been burnt. This has an impact on air quality and on the lives, livelihoods and safety of people living in the affected areas. Be assured of our continued prayers for these fires to cease.

I am reminded of Luke 4:18-20, where we read, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

My sincere hope and prayer is that the Anglican Church in Canada continues to follow this call to proclaim the Good News in meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the people. May you be a light unto others through your work to tackle climate change, disaster response, to promote the rights of Indigenous communities as well as all the other commendable work that you do as a Church.

Before I conclude, I would like to refer to a matter that would be discussed at this Synod. While it is not my role to influence your debate and voting, I do want to indeed highlight the draft resolution calling for peace in Sudan.

As I have said, each of the 42 provinces of the Anglican Communion are independent and autonomous, but they are also interdependent. This draft resolution is an example of one province offering support and, solidarity with another.

Archbishop Linda, I know that you know Archbishop Ezekiel. You meet at Primates’ Meetings. Your ACC members know the Episcopal Church of Sudan’s ACC members. They meet at plenary sessions. It is this – the inter-connectedness across continents, cultures and languages – which is the strength of our Anglican Communion.

In my recent communication with Archbishop Ezekiel, he asked for prayers for peace in Sudan. And I do hope that this Synod will do exactly that.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today. I look forward to walking with you and supporting you in the ways that I can during my time as Secretary General of the Anglican Communion. Thank you very much.

Closing remarks by the Most Revd Linda Nicholls, Archbishop of Canada:

Thank you, Anthony, for that passionate defence of the Anglican Communion and the work that is going on in review and change, as well as the reminder of our interdependence, one with another.