

Notes on Reflections on the Lambeth Conference

The very name “the Anglican Communion” tells you something about the expectations of the Anglican family – that they are trying to live out to the fullest possible extent the fellowship, the communion, that we are brought into by our baptism into Christ.

In Section A of the Reflections Document, the bishops explain something of the time spent in Canterbury, and affirm that it was, indeed, a time of warm and active **fellowship** – in worship, in study and in discussion. The discussion at this 14th Lambeth Conference was modelled on the African concept of the tribal village coming together for purposeful conversation about the most serious concerns in the village’s life: at Lambeth, indaba was intended to empower every bishop to contribute, working in small groups of 8 for Bible Study and 40 for the main discussions.

The Archbishop of Canterbury asked the Conference to concentrate on two themes: Equipping Bishops for Mission and strengthening Anglican Identity.

In Sections B and C of the Reflections Document, the bishops reflect on the nature of **Mission and Evangelism** – that what begins with personal conversion and transformation through Jesus Christ spills out into the redemption of all of creation. Christians have to be concerned with **justice** for individuals and in society, focussing upon the most needy and outcast in our society. They seek to transform the world and to serve the world according to the pattern of Jesus himself.

In Section D of the document, the bishops extend this concept of mission into the area of the care for the **environment** – a major concern in the life of the world at present – but also part of the stewardship of God’s people for God’s gift of creation.

In Sections E and F, the bishops recognise that they belong to a bigger reality which is Christ’s Church, so that **ecumenism**, or the discovery and development of our commission from Christ to proclaim the Gospel with our sister Churches, east and west, is part and parcel of our faithful response to God. The section reaffirms Anglican commitment to full visible unity of the Church. They recall that in the wider contexts of our mission; Christianity is not alone as a world faith, and our modern context means that we have to enter into **dialogue with other world faiths**. This section calls for respectful dialogue.

In Section G, the bishops explore the distinctive contribution of **Anglican Identity** to world Christianity. We can describe ourselves as formed by scripture, shaped by worship, ordered for communion and directed by God’s Mission.

In Section H, the difficult questions around the tensions over **homosexuality** are explored, leading into a reflection on the authority of **scripture** in Anglican thinking in Section I. While there is a fairly common view of the authority of scripture, there is no agreement on the understanding of homosexuality. Section J addresses the question of the **covenant**, offering support to ongoing discernment; Section K addresses the **Windsor Process**, and offers affirmation to aspects of the work of the Continuation Group, including the request for moratoria.