

*A Summary of  
Lambeth Indaba: Capturing Conversations and Reflections  
The Reflections Document of the Lambeth Conference 2008*

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### What did the Bishops do at the Lambeth Conference?

The model adopted by the Archbishop of Canterbury (*indaba*) was not oriented towards the passing of resolutions but towards respectful listening and the imperative that all bishops voices be heard and valued; offering an open space for Bishops to express their views knowing that they would be heard. This process generated honest interchange and mutual understanding and assisted bishops to respond to the concerns and mission imperatives of their colleagues across two broad themes: *Equipping Bishops for God's Mission* and *Strengthening Anglican Identity*.

The results of this *indaba* are articulated in the Reflections Document, entitled “*Lambeth Indaba*” which is a narrative of the bishops’ engagement with the themes, setting out the essence of their conversations. The narrative was compiled by bishops specially nominated from the sixteen small *indaba* groups of about forty bishops each, which included bishops in communion and ecumenical participants. The narrative was received in the groups and through a number of plenary hearings, seeking ownership by the bishops attending the Conference. The Bishops were assisted by the leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the meditations given at the opening Retreat and in his three presidential addresses and closing sermon to the Conference, and by several inspiring non-Anglican speakers who provided significant wisdom on key issues in God’s mission. These speakers included: Dr Brian McLaren, Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, Cardinal Ivan Dias and Professor Chris Rapley.

### What convergences did the Reflections Group perceive in the Conference?

The listeners described in the Reflections Document that they had discerned:

1. A greater mutual desire to pray for and engage with each other so that deeper understanding may be found (Lambeth Indaba Document [LI] paragraphs 3, 15–18). The depth of fellowship present at the Lambeth Conference, nourished by the daily pattern of Eucharist, common prayer and bible study, and the commitment to interdependence and common mission priorities were identified as the key fruit of the Conference. The ecumenical participants broadened this awareness for interdependence.

The Reflections Group also discerned among the bishops:

#### *Equipping bishops for God's Mission*

2. A strong commitment to mission (LI §19-42), which includes personal conversion (LI §19, 25), and which extends to the transformation of the whole of society (LI §20, 43)

3. A common understanding of Provincial and Communion life as supporting and nourishing the mission of the local (diocesan) Church (LI §24-42)
4. Commitment to human and social justice; to the Millennium Development Goals (LI §45, 52), to the family (LI §46), to children (LI §47), and to reconciliation (LI §54,55)
5. Commitment against violence, both domestic (LI §49) and international (LI §154) and against the abuse of power (LI §50)
6. Commitment to working for the care of the environment (LI §59-69)
7. Commitment to the ecumenical movement as seeking the full visible unity of the Church (LI §71-76), a quest which involves commitment to theological dialogue (LI §77) and co-operation in mission (LI §81,82)
8. A shared understanding of the relationship between Christianity and other world faiths (LI §85-98), which seeks to be true to the Gospel of Christ and the generous love of God to all humanity (LI §89)

### *Strengthening Anglican Identity*

9. A common understanding of Anglican Identity as formed by scripture (LI §100), shaped by worship (LI §101), ordered for communion (LI §102) and directed by God's Mission (LI §103).
10. A common understanding of the ministry of bishops which included: gathering the whole community in celebration, presiding over the sacraments and ordaining new priests and deacons; proclaiming the Word of God as an apostolic witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; being a teacher, guardian and interpreter of the faith and the apostolic tradition; being active in making and nurturing disciples, a shepherd (pastor) of the whole people of God, with a special concern for the clergy of the diocese and a prophetic voice for the voiceless. The bishop is a symbol of unity, "representing the local to the universal and the universal to the local, part of a worldwide college of bishops across the Communion and within the One Church of Christ". (LI §104)
11. A commitment in common to Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word of God, crucified, risen, ascended and coming again (LI §21, 122-123, 133-134)
12. A common approach to the authority of scripture as the Word of God (LI §124), God's gift to the whole church for teaching and guidance, admonition and pastoral care (LI §125). The scriptures were recognised as the primary source for equipping the apostolic ministry of bishops, containing all things necessary to salvation (LI §124), and whose "full reliability" is acknowledged (LI §125)
13. A common recognition of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as "faithful and sufficient statements of the essentials of the biblical witness". (LI §125)

14. Affirmations of the place of biblical scholarship (LI §126-129) and of the scriptures in worship (LI §130-134)
15. The Reflections Group reported that the bishops recognised the complexities and concerns which arose in consideration of *homosexuality* (LI §110-112, 117-119), and the need to exercise charity and a commitment to common discernment in discussion of this issue, and to avoid judgementalism (LI §107-108). Bishops had gained a greater awareness that a decision by one part of the Church had serious impact and consequences for another part of the Church.
16. There was a strong level of support for the proposal for an *Anglican Covenant* (LI §140, 144, 136-139). It should be relational rather than juridical (LI §138, 140, 141, 144). Comments on the St Andrew's Draft were forwarded to the Covenant Design Group.
17. There was widespread support for the implementation of *the moratoria requested in the Windsor Report*<sup>1</sup>, and a desire to see them upheld. The difficulties in so doing were recognised. It was acknowledged that the three moratoria must be seen as related, and applied consistently, and there will need to be further discernment about the appropriate way in which they may be applied. (LI §145)
18. There was “clear majority support” for the speedy establishment of a *Pastoral Forum* by which the current issues, and potentially other difficult matters, could be addressed in the life of the Communion. The forum should be “pastoral and not legal”, based on a process which would “move towards reconciliation” through careful consultation and responsible accountability. (LI §146)
19. The bishops offered several insights into the working of *the Instruments of Communion*, commending the work of the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the ministry of the present incumbent (LI §148), and encouraging more frequent and “slimmer” Lambeth Conferences (LI §149). Concerns were raised about the role and functioning of both the Anglican Consultative Council (LI §150) and the Primates' Meeting (LI §151).
20. Statements of solidarity in situations of injustice were made in support of different churches around the world. (LI §153-162)

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<sup>1</sup> On the authorisation by bishops of public Rites of Blessing for same-sex unions, on the confirmation of election of bishops living in a same-gender union, and on cross-provincial interventions.