



Report from Communion Partner Participants on the Global South Conference on Decade of Mission and Networking

Over 100 participants, from 21 of the 38 Provinces of the Anglican Communion, representing the vast majority of practicing Anglicans in the world, gathered together in Bangkok, Thailand for the “Global South Conference on the Decade of Mission and Networking” July 16-21, 2012. In attendance were thirteen Primates from the Global South as well as other “mission partners” from other parts of the Anglican Communion, including four representatives of the Communion Partners fellowship of the Episcopal Church, U.S.A. (Bishop Michael Smith, Bishop Dan Martins, Dean Tony Clark and Father Chuck Alley) who had been invited by the Global South Primates’ Network.

Some background: why were participants from the Communion Partners fellowship invited to this Global South Conference? In 2010, the following points were made in the Communiqué from the Fourth Global South-to-South Encounter in Singapore:

18. Some of our Provinces are already in a state of broken and impaired Communion with The Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada. Their continued refusal to honor the many requests made of them by the various meetings of the Primates throughout the Windsor Process have brought discredit to our witness and we urge the Archbishop of Canterbury to implement the recommended actions. In light of the above, this Fourth South-to-South Encounter encourages our various Provinces to reconsider their communion relationships with The Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada until it becomes clear that there is genuine repentance.

19. We were pleased to welcome two Communion Partner bishops from The Episcopal Church USA (TEC) and acknowledge that with them there are many within TEC who do not accept their church’s innovations. We assure them of our loving and prayerful support. We are grateful that the recently formed Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) is a faithful expression of Anglicanism. We welcomed them as partners in the Gospel and our hope is that all provinces will be in full communion with the clergy and people of the ACNA and the Communion Partners.

The theme of this 2012 Conference was “Be Transformed by the Renewing of the Mind to Obedience of Faith for Holistic Mission in a Radically Changing Global Landscape.”

Reflections from the four Communion Partner participants follow:

Bishop Michael Smith: “It was a blessing to be invited to this Conference, and what an eye-opening and informative experience it was! The different challenges facing churches in the Global ‘South’ (Africa, Asia, Latin America) and the Global ‘North’ (Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand) were highlighted. According to presenters, the greatest challenge to spreading the Gospel in the Global South is Islam and other militant religions. Careful attention was drawn, however, between the different kinds and perspectives of Muslims throughout the

world. It was noted that post-911, Islam has been divided between moderate, peace-seeking Muslims (70%) and more radical Jihadist adherents (30%). Churches of the Global North, on the other hand, are confronted by growing secularism and materialism. Both North and South, however, share challenges brought about by ‘shallow discipleship.’ We both seem to have more ‘members’ than ‘disciples’ and all need to grow deeper in our faith and personal and corporate walks with Christ.

We heard from missionaries, missiologists and church growth statisticians. Amazingly, if current trends continue, by 2050 80% of the Anglican Communion will be from Africa! It seems that the center of Christianity shifted from the Global North to the Global South in the 1980’s. While Christianity continues to decline in the North, it is alive and growing in the South.



‘Holistic Mission’ was a phrase used often. Although I did not hear the term ‘Five Marks of Mission,’² I thought of it when the former term was used. Clearly, evangelism, reducing poverty, education and preventing and curing disease are included in the Global South’s concept of ‘Holistic Mission.’ The Millennium Development Goals³ of the United Nations were mentioned as helpful, but inadequate in ‘Holistic Mission’ if evangelism and the presentation of a living faith in Jesus Christ are not included.

Just as in the 1990’s churches of the Anglican Communion declared a ‘Decade of Evangelism,’ so the Anglican churches of the Global South have inaugurated a ‘Decade of Mission and Networking’ to plant indigenous churches in the nations of the world, especially in those places where the Gospel has not been heard or received. It was a privilege to be there to see it commence. How resources will be found for this task will be a challenge and one, in my opinion, where the Communion Partners should be significantly involved. Perhaps we could begin to think of ourselves and to act as a type of ‘mission society.’”

Father Chuck Alley: “The conference theme of mission was thoroughly grounded in daily biblical exposition on chapter twelve, verses one and two, of St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans. Archbishop John Chew of Singapore spoke about how foundational that passage is to the missionary enterprise of God’s Church. St. Paul’s challenge to us in our multicultural context is to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Since a proper sacrifice to a holy God must be perfect and spotless, he seems to be asking us the impossible. But he goes on to tell us that our bodies must be transformed by the renewing of our minds, which is learning what is the good and acceptable will of God. The bottom line is that our role is to be obedient in faith and our task is to bring about the obedience of faith in others (Romans 1:5; 15:14; 16:25). Therefore, the prerequisite for mission is our absolute faithful obedience to God

The second day, Bishop Dapo Asaju (Nigeria) taught on the topic of consecrated bodies. In presenting our bodies as holy sacrifices we are instructed to keep in mind that:

1. We can only serve God through the power of God (temples of the Holy Spirit);
2. We need to feel for each others' body (hurt with those who hurt);
3. We must be of one mind, one spirit, and one Lord (unified by the head).

Our sacrifice is that we are to take our bodies out into the world like St. Paul. He listed seven characteristics about the Apostle. He was clear about his call or mandate. St. Paul was positive and confident about his theology. The Apostle obeyed his commission to go. He contended for the faith. He was a man of revelation, not liturgy and theology. St. Paul finished his race. He also depended upon the power of God. Therefore he could write to Timothy: 'I have fought the good fight and I have kept the faith' (2 Timothy 4:7). The Anglican Church must go back to God in unity if we are to be successful in mission, because God is the author of mission.

Archbishop Bernard Ntahoturi of Burundi used our theme passage on the third day to remind us that we are all called to mission. He pointed out that we are called to be committed to Christ, to character formation, to the Church as a people of hope, to compassion in that we are to love God and our neighbor, to celebrate by finishing the journey placed before us as servants of Christ, and to become Christ-like. In summary, we need to replace our world-view of secularism, materialism, and individualism with the God-view by the application of the Gospel to our daily lives. Then we will be transformed by the power of God and our lives will conform to the heart of our missionary God.

The teaching on Romans 12:1-2, on the fourth day was by a priest from the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in New Delhi, Paul Swarup. He asked the question, why does our mind need to be transformed? Then he took us to Genesis 3:4-6 and showed how humankind fell spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially. This is the context in which all Christian mission is performed. As we begin we need to realize how totally and completely lost human beings are without Christ. Next, we must see that it is God who initiated redemption (Genesis 18:19). This passage directly links election, ethics and mission. Abraham was chosen so that he would teach his descendents to obey God and thereby realize God's promise. That is the bedrock of mission."

Bishop Dan Martins: "I was honored to accompany Bishop Smith, Dr. Alley, and Dean Clark to this conference. It came at a significant time, and was held in a significant place. As Bishop John Chew—recently retired as Archbishop of Singapore and Primate of Southeast Asia—welcomed us on the first evening, he pointed out that 2012 is a year of great ferment in the world and in the church: the Arab Spring, the European Union debt crisis, a new Archbishop of Canterbury about to be appointed, a difficult General Synod in the Church of England and a difficult General Convention in the Episcopal Church. Bangkok, with its tiny minority Christian population, is emblematic of the missional challenge the worldwide church faces, and the Anglican Global South movement now has a two decade history of taking responsible principled stands in the councils of the worldwide Anglican Communion. What better time, what better place, and what better group is there to network together for the sake of mission?"

As a Christian in the western developed world (Global North? ... First World? ... we began to drift toward 'Minority World,' and this is probably the most accurate descriptor), I found it both

sobering and humbling to be in the presence of leaders whose working contexts are materially and spiritually challenging in ways I can scarcely imagine. The rising tide of militant Islam emerged as perhaps the dominant area of concern. In places like Nigeria and Tanzania, the frontiers of the two religious cultures clash with one another, and in places like Pakistan, Christians are a barely tolerated minority. In our world, of course, the challenge is the rampant secularization of our society. They are different problems, but both invite strong measures of faith, vision, and discipline.

When the four of us from the Episcopal Church had the opportunity to address the group in plenary, we spoke very briefly and tried to strike a humble tone. We apologized for the long pattern of damage done to the wider communion by our own church, most recently the most recent General Convention, and shared the Indianapolis Statement minority report.⁴ Our stance was that we need the voice of the Global South to speak for us, since we are a minority voice within our own church. This is sensitive territory. Some of those present were somewhat cool toward us because we remain in what they see as a hopelessly compromised church. They have transferred their seal of approval to the ACNA. Others are more sympathetic to our position and grateful for our continuing witness from within the Episcopal Church. I don't think we changed any minds among the former, but we did strengthen our position with the latter, and moved some off the fence in our direction.

In a few minutes that evening, I think we may have essentially accomplished what we came here for, and in this context the trip was eminently worthwhile. It put our names and faces in front of people who might otherwise be tempted to forget about us or write us off. We want the Global South, which represents the overwhelming majority of the world's Anglicans, to be very clear that not all in the Episcopal Church are supportive of the communion-shattering and self-absorbed actions of recent General Conventions. There is a remnant. We need their encouragement and leadership as we endeavor to be a loyal but uncompromised minority party in our church for the indefinite future. We also have gifts to offer as partners in gospel witness and mission.

This conference was not a particularly historic event, but it is nonetheless important. ... This group includes some of the key 'players' in Anglicanism, whether one perceives their influence as benign or malign. Both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion Office sent formal greetings. Nothing world-shaking emerged from the meeting. But when something significant does happen, these are many of the leaders who will be involved.”

Dean Tony Clark: “Look around my study and you will notice a take-out box from a local Chinese restaurant. The take-out box is a simple reminder to include ‘take-aways’ in my preaching and teaching. With my recent trip to Bangkok, Thailand and the Global South Conference on Mission and Networking a fresh memory, the take-out box reminds me of significant take-aways from that rewarding time of worship, fellowship and learning.

Firstly, regardless of the setting - Singapore, Tanzania, North America, or India – the international participants truly desired interaction with their culture and context for the sake of the Gospel. For many, their culture and context is heavily influenced by a militant Buddhism,

Hinduism or Islam. For those brothers and sisters in Christ, a very literal martyrdom is often a real part of worshiping and serving the Lord in their culture and context.

Secularism - a view that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or excluded from social and political matters – presents the most significant challenge to Christians in the ‘Global North’: North America, Europe, Australia and other ‘developed’ countries. Recognizing the spiritual enemy proved an ‘Aha moment’ for those of us from the United States, Canada and Australia. A central question for us wonders, ‘How do we as Americans proclaim and live the Gospel in a culture and context defined by secularism?’

While our cultures and contexts differ, we – the Global North – and the Global South need one another as partners in the proclamation of the Gospel. The Global North still offers remarkable resources for Gospel service. The Global South offers a remarkable passion – often missing in the sophisticated Global North – for a holistic Gospel that encompasses the spiritual, economic, political and social dimensions of life.

If, for example, the Global North provides the sails and the Global South provides the wind, how can we cooperatively power the mission and ministry of the Global Church in different cultures and contexts? The Global South’s Conference on Mission and Networking began answering that question by strengthening relationships between the Global South and those in the Global North committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

At the close of the Conference two Communiqués were issued: one from the Conference itself⁵ and one from the Global South Primates.⁶ Of special interest to the Communion Partners are two points from the Primates’ Communiqué:



6. We note with great sadness the passing of Resolution A049 at the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church which authorized a liturgy for blessing same-sex unions. This action confirms our disappointment that The Episcopal Church has no regard for the concerns and convictions of the vast majority of Anglicans worldwide.

7. We stand in solidarity with our brethren in the Communion Partners who have dissented from this action. We uphold them in prayer and support them in fellowship as they continue in their commitment to the evangelical faith and catholic order of the Church, as expressed in their Minority Report known as “The Indianapolis Statement.”

Submitted by:

The Rt. Rev. Michael G. Smith, Bishop of North Dakota
Chair, Communion Partners Bishops Advisory Committee

The Rt. Rev. Daniel Martins, Bishop of Springfield
Communion Partners Bishops Advisory Committee

The Rev. Dr. Charles Alley, St. Matthew’s Church, Richmond, Virginia
Chair, Communion Partners Rectors Advisory Committee

The Very Rev. Tony Clark, Cathedral of St. Luke, Orlando, Florida
Communion Partners Rectors Advisory Committee

¹http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/fourth_trumpet_from_the_fourth_anglican_global_south_to_south_encounter

²<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>

³<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html>

⁴<http://www.comunionpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Indianapolis-Statement1.pdf>

⁵http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/a_communique_from_the_global_south_conference_on_the_decade_of_mission_and

⁶http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/communique_of_the_global_south_primates_bangkok_thailand_20_july_2012