

The 9<sup>th</sup> Consultation of Bishops in Dialogue  
Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada  
London, ON  
Friday, July 20, 2018

**Remarks**

Thank you for the privilege of being with you for a part of this day's conversations.

At the very outset, I want to acknowledge the outstanding support this Dialogue has had from The Rev. Canon Dr. Isaac Kawuki-Mukasa, Dr. Andrea Mann, and Ms. Claudia Alvarez. Isaac has a quiet, but very effective way of inviting, organizing and communicating. As a servant of the Church, he is without a shadow of doubt, "modest, humble and constant in his labours". This Dialogue has been well served by gentle and graceful leadership. Thank you Isaac.

Andrea likewise, is an incredibly competent and cheerful servant of the Church who not only holds but also shares a vast knowledge of Global Relations and Communion affairs. This Dialogue has likewise, been very well served by her devotion to detail and attentiveness to nuance. Thank you Andrea.

Claudia too, has steadfastly served this Dialogue, in her close and persistent attention to the details of air travel, expense claims and all miscellaneous logistics. Thank you, Claudia.

This Dialogue emerged from a reception hosted by our dear friend, Archbishop Colin Johnson at the Lambeth Conference in 2008. He invited any Canadian or African Bishop interested in a conversation to come together over drinks. Stories were shared and interest in continuing conversation was peaked. Friendships took shape and a desire to meet again was expressed. So we owe a great debt of gratitude to Colin for calling us together and for his unwavering faithfulness as a convenor, participant, host, writer, and companion on The Way. Thank you Colin.

I want to recognize as well, the courage with which some of you came into this dialogue – you and some of your brother or sister bishops not present for this meeting. In the face of opposition and counsel not to be associated with this dialogue, you took a risk, a risk of being marginalized within your own House of Bishops or disciplined by your Primate. Nevertheless, you stood up for your conviction in the truth of Desmond Tutu's counsel that notwithstanding our differences, "we meet". I admire your tenacity. It is exemplary for us all.

From my perspective this Dialogue is a beautiful thing, a work of the Spirit and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has and continues to be a labour of love, a labour that has borne much fruit, fruit that will last. (John 15: 12-17)

Out of gatherings in London, Dar es Salaam, Toronto, Cape Town, Coventry, Richmond Virginia, Accra, and Nairobi, you have issued testimonies – each one reflecting biblical principles and gospel values – grace, love, hope, reconciliation, bearing one another's burdens, unity in diversity, and mutual commitment.

Each of these testimonies reference the particular missional context in which you have gathered and the hospitality you enjoyed. Each one referenced some local expression or concept that informed and enriched your conversation. I think first of “Indaba” introduced to us at the Lambeth Conference and then of a “Sacred Circle” in which we come together for respectful conversation with intentional listening. I think of “Sanfoka”, an Akan concept we learned about in Ghana, teaching us that “the past is a dynamic reality that cannot be divorced from and ignored in our consideration of the present and the future”. “Tete wo bi ka” – the past makes a contribution to the present and for that matter, the future. It has much to teach us about heritage and hope in Christ. I think of “Haraambe”, the principle of pulling together, joining hands to build up, especially in times of community need where resources are scarce, everyone working together for the common good.

This Dialogue continues to be a wonderful expression of the kind of friendship into which Christ calls us; the nature of Church as taught by Paul and Peter; and the grace of commitment to “bonds of affection”, one for another in Christ nurtured in ever so many ways through our cycles of prayer, companion diocese relationships, the alliances and networks of our Communion and statements of solidarity with those who are facing trouble or persecution.

I respect very much the way you began this dialogue. Out of Dar es Salaam you wrote  
“We gathered assuming friendship and collegiality, extending goodwill and humility to one another, knowing that we are one in shared faith and values (Ephesians 4:1-6).

...

We are engaged in a quest for language that will bring us to common understanding and to better dialogue. That does not mean that we agree or that we seek an agreement on particular issues.”

Out of Toronto you spoke of your experience in this dialogue as “a work-in-progress” and that “it has taken time to develop confidence in one another and in our conversations.” You went on to reference that lovely image of Rowan Williams – that “we are a Communion in the making, still being shaped and formed in the hands of God, who desires of us and for us the fullness of partnership that comes out of attentiveness, prayer and love.”

Out of Cape Town, you spoke of the much needed work of reconciliation within the Church and within the world, and noted that a key part of this work is reclaiming our humanity under God.

Out of Coventry, you wrote,

“To be a pilgrim at Coventry Cathedral is to move unavoidably and purposefully from old to new across the porch, the middle ground between what was and what is coming, crossing from what was to what will be, to hear the words of Christ in Glory, “See, I am making all things new.” (Revelation 21:5) It is in this middle ground between what was and what will be that all Christians stand, but it is the particular vocation of Anglicans to stand in the middle, to be the incarnate people of reconciliation.”

Out of Virginia, you bore testimony saying,

“We do not intend to exacerbate the conflicts and tensions existing within the Communion...When we seek to isolate ourselves from one another, we are diminished

to the point of jeopardizing our humanity...We must never lag in our resolve to safeguard our common life which is the very existence of each of us within the Body of Christ.”

Out of Accra, you wrote with all modesty,

“We do not see ourselves as solving the problems of the Communion. We are not an official structure, but an informal fellowship with an ever changing and ever broader membership. We hope we may act as a witness to the Church’s spiritual unity for which our Lord Jesus Christ prayed (John 17:11). Our purpose is neither to resolve nor to ignore differences, but to deepen relationships and therefore to nurture mutual understanding. We continue in our desire to be globally diverse and to keep searching for the ties that bind.”

Out of Nairobi, you spoke of “myths and stereotypes, misunderstandings and propaganda having been broken down”. You re-iterated your conviction that “we have so much more in common than the issues that threaten our unity at this time.” You spoke honestly of both “the personal cost in embracing each other” across difference and “the enrichment” that comes through such work. You spoke of a need throughout the Communion for “deeper exploration into our different contexts and how context shapes theology, ministry, and leadership”.

And friends, who knows what will come out of this gathering in London, the very birthplace of the long held principle for Communion-wide relationships - MRI – Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence within the Body of Christ. I am confident it will be a yet further witness to the integrity with which you have gathered to these many years.

Next year I understand, you will be hosted in Liverpool, England and in Zanzibar in 2020 and that much of your work in those gatherings will be way of preparation for “bearing testimony” at Lambeth in 2020.

My own hope is that all your Testimonies and any reference documents that accompany them will indeed be bound and published. They are worth widespread circulation and consideration in the midst of on-going tensions in the Communion over issues of human sexuality.

In your Testimony of Hope, you “encouraged similar dialogues across the Communion, dialogues that grow organically, with emerging agendas as a way to develop understanding, build trust and further reconciliation. These may be small regional gatherings. We suggest such dialogues include opportunities to visit and learn from the ministries of the local Church.”

I believe such dialogues might well be taken up within Provinces of the Anglican Communion. Within The Anglican Church of Canada there are four conversations that reflect the opportunity of which I speak.

- The commitment of the College of Bishops in The Diocese of Toronto to speak and work together knowing and respecting how theologically diverse their perspectives on marriage are. Colin could speak to this.

- The conversation between The Diocese of Huron and The Diocese of Brandon which generally speaking, would hold very different views on marriage. Linda could speak to this.
- The conversation with Indigenous Peoples within The Anglican Church of Canada concerning marriage. While not all Indigenous People cleave to the traditional teaching of marriage as being between a man and a woman for life, most do. Should our Church amend its Marriage Canon at General Synod next year Indigenous People are speaking of “self-differentiation” from a decision of the Synod that would amend the Marriage Canon to provide for same gender marriage. I could say more about this if you are interested.
- The gatherings I have hosted for the self-styled “Gracious Restraint Bishops” who publicly dissented from the General Synod’s approval in 2016 of a first reading of a resolution to amend the Marriage Canon. Past their public Statement and my Pastoral Letter to them in response, it took some time for my invitation to meet for conversation to be accepted. We have had three meetings – all of which, were marked by honest and frank exchange and a commitment each time to meet again. At the end of our third meeting, I raised the possibility of broadening our circle to include three other bishops, all of whom favour same gender marriage. That invitation was accepted and we had a very good day together. I could say much more about this as could Colin.

One of the great moments in our spring meeting of the House of Bishop was when a couple of our bishops, holding very diverse views on marriage spoke of what a good experience that day of conversation had been and expressed hope that we might replicate the opportunity for all our bishops. Any and all such opportunities would be in the very spirit of what you said in your Testimony of Unity and Diversity.

“...Without face to face encounters it is easy to apply labels, to stop listening, and no longer to see one another as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

To be fully the body of Christ we are compelled to be together. We are learning to live with our differences and with each other, with the love we find in Jesus Christ. We are developing greater cross cultural understanding and feel our episcopal ministries have been enriched.”

In many respects our own House of Bishops is working hard to embrace the principles of what the Archbishop of Canterbury coins “good disagreement”.

On the call for “Shared Conversations” over matters of sexuality in the Church of England the Bishop of Sheffield helpfully wrote.

“There is no expectation of achieving any consensus – in either direction – in the foreseeable future. But there is a task to be done of encouraging those within the church who are at odds on this issue to express their concerns in a safe environment, listen carefully to those with whom they disagree profoundly, find something of Christ in each other and consider together what the practical consequence of disagreement might be. From New Testament times the church of Christ has had to face

disagreement. Fashioning our life as a church includes finding ways to “disagree Christianly”.

Well brothers and sisters, I have probably far exceeded the time allocated for remarks. Forgive me for being so long, but I hope you glean from what I have said and how I have said it, that I have an enormous respect for who you are and what you are about in this dialogue.

I believe your Testimonies are a powerful witness of the unity Christ wills for his Church. They are a wonderful reflection of the call of all clergy and especially bishops to embody the four classic marks of the Church – oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity.

Commenting on each, Rosalind Brown and Christopher Cocksworth write:

“We are to be *one*, integrated, at peace with ourselves, body, mind and spirit, able to live authentically with ourselves and with integrity with others, respecting difference and enjoying togetherness. We are to be *holy*, icons of a new way of living, fully alive in our humanity, gladly receiving all that our creaturely human life offers, and allowing it to be infused with faith, hope, and love. We are to be *catholic*, connected to the *kathos*, the whole, faithfully living life with others. We are to be *apostolic*, people sent to serve, thrust out with the same generative energy that we see in those who first gave birth to the Church. The Church is saying, ‘We want to be able to look at you and be reminded of what we have been called to be. And remember that as we place you in this relation to us, so the world will look to you to read us.’”