

Global South turnaround for a different future

Last month in Singapore the fourth South to South Encounter took a turn different from the aim of the planning committee.

They hoped to affirm the Anglican Covenant promoted by the Archbishop of Canterbury as a way of dealing with current conflicts in the Anglican Communion.

The conference made acceptance of the covenant tougher with extra demands on the current final text and at the same time consolidated steps for the Global South provinces to walk away into a different future.

In 1986 in Brisbane a conference of Anglican mission agencies from around the world met to discuss the mission scene in the southern hemisphere. The conference encouraged the southern hemisphere countries to get together to share ways to advance the mission of the church in their different cultural settings. Out of this recommendation The Global South Network was born at its first meeting in Limuru 1994. It has subsequently met in Kuala Lumpur, El-Ein-Suknah in Egypt and now most recently (April 19-23) in Singapore.

What started out as a consultation on mission has taken on a whole new dimension in the conflicts of the Anglican Communion. Mission has remained central to its concerns but its meetings have been placed in a different context.

This recent meeting of the network is the first since the GAFCON and Lambeth conferences in 2008. It also took place at a time of significance for the proposed Anglican Covenant which the Archbishop of Canterbury hopes will provide a way forward in dealing with the conflicts over sexuality in the Communion.

While the actions of the Episcopal Church in the US and the Anglican Church of Canada have precipitated this crisis it is also a crisis about ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In Australia our church constitution establishes the dioceses as the basic unit of the church for jurisdictional purposes. On clergy discipline there is an option to appeal ultimately to the national Appellate Tribunal. Bishops in our church are dealt with by a special national tribunal established for that purpose. Bishops are thus inhibited from interfering in the affairs of another diocese unless invited to do so. Some bishops from the Global South Network consecrated some clergy to act as bishops in North America despite the fact that their constitutions and that of the Episcopal Church clearly forbade such action.

So the conflict in the Angli-



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can Communion is about both sex and church jurisdiction and the bishops of the Global South have been active offenders in the jurisdiction question.

In December 2009 the planning committee of Global South Primates steering committee announced that at this South to South Encounter they aimed to affirm the Anglican Covenant as the basis for intensifying the ecclesial life between churches in the Communion. They emphasised that those attending should be unequivocally committed to supporting the Lambeth 1998 resolution 1.10 against homosexuality in the church and the Anglican Covenant.

One hundred and thirty delegates attended from 20 provinces. No delegates from West Africa, Asia or South America were there because their travel was disrupted by the volcano eruption in Iceland. So through no fault of the organisers it was smaller than expected. They published an extensive communiqué on their website (*see below*).

Despite the stated aim of the steering committee the conference did not affirm the covenant. On the contrary they called for further review to strengthen its disciplinary powers which they said should be exercised by the primates. They added a new demand that all who sign the covenant must agree with the Lambeth 1998 Resolution 1.10. They declare that there is a need to review the entire Anglican Communion structure; especially the Instruments of Communion and the Anglican Communion Office; in order to achieve an authentic expression of the current reality of our Anglican Communion.

Four days after this communiqué the archbishop of Sydney, Peter Jensen responded in his capacity as General Secretary of the GAFCON continuation organisation, The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (*see website below*).

He was at the conference in



DELEGATES: Some of the 130 delegates who attended the South to South Encounter in Singapore in April. Hopes that the gathering would affirm the Anglican Covenant were not realised; instead the conference seemed to prepare the way for the provinces of the Global South to separate from the Anglican Communion.

Singapore and the crux of his interpretation is that the Encounter reflected the new reality of the Anglican Communion, a theme he has spoken about on other occasions. The official communiqué expressed appreciation for the video greeting from Rowan Williams, but Peter Jensen tells us that the conference was unresponsive to the video greeting from the archbishop of Canterbury: this plea for patience misjudged the situation by several years and his talk of an Anglican covenant was not where the actual conference was at. The crisis in the Anglican Communion has passed and we are now in the new reality of that past crisis.

The pre-conference commitment to the covenant, on this account, has disappeared. They are moving on elsewhere building their own resources and networks and consolidating their institutions.

It is not surprising that the identity of their institutions as Anglican, if not as the Anglican Communion, is increasingly pressing for them. The other side of that process seems to be the diminution of the Anglican identity of the existing Anglican Communion institutions. One cannot but wonder what or who influenced the conference in this move away from the covenant and its implied desire to stay with some-

thing of the past Communion experience of Anglicanism?

There are those, Peter Jensen said, who want to play by the old institutional rules. These people say that under these rules the separated Anglican network of churches in North America, called the Anglican Church of North America, should not be seen as part of the Anglican Communion until it has been admitted under the terms of the constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council. The ACC is the only body in the Anglican Communion with a constitution agreed to by a vote of the provinces. This constitutionality is described by Peter Jensen as risible in its artificiality.

The conference communiqué makes it clear that the future is

to be a time of building resources, securing networks and pursuing their goals. Peter Jensen makes the same point.

Action is required in what he describes as the post crisis phase. One thing is for sure; those who wait and do nothing will be playing into the hands of ideologues who have had such a triumph in the west. This is especially so for the orthodox in those churches in the west which have yet to come into their moment of truth.

But does not this consolidation of a separatist set of institutions foreshadow a crisis yet to come, even for the orthodox in The Anglican Church of Australia? And who is to say who is an ideologue if there is no patient listening to others?

Synergy Director gains PhD

Congratulations to Synergy Youth & Children Director Matt Brain, who attained his PhD recently.

Matt studied for his Doctorate of Pastoral Theology through the University of Notre Dame (Australia), and while he won't be formally presented with his award till the end of the year he can now use the title.

The title of his thesis was: *Treasure in Jars of Clay: Towards a new Pauline pastoral theology of mission to Generation Y in Australia.*

Matt said he tried to take Paul's insights regarding the nature of



PhD: Matt Brain

faith in 2 Corinthians: 4 and apply them to some of the spiritual themes that have been emerging in the lives of young Australians.

The mission writings of Lesslie Newbigin helped me to find connections between the two

worlds, he explained.

Newbigin's ideas of Authenticity, Proximity and Intelligibility helped to connect the Pauline theme of strength in the face of apparent vulnerability, as found in the Christian experience of resurrection with Christ, to Generation Y's experience of the desire for intimate relationship in a highly individualistic world.

Websites referred to in this article:

http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/fourth_trumpet_from_the_fourth_anglican_global_south_to_south

http://www.gafcon.org/news/fca_general_secretary_responds_to_the_global_south_to_south_encounter/