



Lambeth Conference 2008 - Section D: Environment

59. The fifth mark of mission is: “To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and renew the life of the earth.” So far this is the mark of mission least universally owned by the churches of the communion. If we say that “The earth is the Lord’s...”, we must be prepared to live as if that is true! We can not misuse a gift from the Lord. If we are to call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ, we must be prepared for radical discipleship by “living simply, so that others may simply live.” Safeguarding creation is a spiritual issue. Climate change is posing questions freshly for us about our attitudes toward creation, technology, sustainability for a future, and justice for all people. This is a discipleship issue not something we might possibly do. When others see that we Anglicans take the issue of environment seriously, they may be drawn to work alongside us, and in so doing they may see the Good News of Jesus Christ proclaimed in action.

60. Ignorance of the issues of environment is a priority that must be addressed. Stories shared from bishops around the Communion give a picture of a global crisis. There are many examples including water pollution, dumping of toxic waste, air pollution, deforestation, irresponsible disposal of garbage. It is clear that the personal level exchange of issues being faced (with first hand knowledge) has a greater impact on us than Western media reports. Environment is the top priority for some provinces and must be a high priority for all of us. In developing countries and among Indigenous peoples, notably in the Arctic, safeguarding creation is a day to day activity, not an intellectual exercise. The Communion’s bishops should take a leading role by example, modelling a simpler lifestyle, using a carbon offset for meeting travel, or travelling less!

61. While many agencies can engage with environmental issues, the church must do so from the starting point of Scripture and a credible theology. One particularly difficult Scripture reference has been Genesis 1:28 where the words ‘have dominion over’ or ‘subdue’ have been misinterpreted as ‘Do whatever you want with the earth.’ If humanity is made in the image of God, who saw that creation was good, then humanity needs to learn to care for God’s creation. Theologies of creation, Sabbath, stewardship and “enough” need to be developed for general use. Creation did not fall, humanity did, and this has led to the destruction of creation. Some of the symptoms of this human sin include selfishness, greed, consumerism and overindulgence. The destruction of the environment is a spiritual issue and the church can suggest taking actions in terms of spiritual disciplines, including repentance of ingrained habits that

are ecologically irresponsible. This is not just trying to fix up the world but living toward the hope of the promised redemption of the creation by God.

62. Indigenous peoples have traditional understandings of the earth as a gift of the Creator and of their relationship to it and its creatures being one of interconnectedness and responsible caring. The Indigenous peoples have reminded us that we are not aliens in a wilderness to be conquered, but integral parts of the created order, as are plants and animals, which are to be cherished and nurtured. The Anglican Indigenous Network could provide good resources for the Communion to develop these ideas more fully.

63. Many examples of destruction focused on various concerns about water. Water is central to baptism, the sacrament of new life. This is a reminder that we have a responsibility for those yet to be born to ensure conditions for their potential life and flourishing. The Communion, Provinces and Dioceses could focus on one major campaign - the human right to water.

64. There is only one instrument for sustaining God's creation – humanity. To get people moving requires moral leadership and this is the role of the church together with other aware bodies, e.g. the United Nations. The Anglican churches must engage with other agencies with sound knowledge and experience to impact church members, various levels of government and the business communities.

What can the church do? Take action! Do not wait any longer!

65. **Education:** Engage with scientists to have accurate and credible information. Scriptural and theological education should be available for seminary students to produce knowledgeable clergy and lay leaders to engage congregations. We need educational materials to encourage children and youth to engage with programs for change. Adult education materials for parishioners would be helpful. Every Anglican must understand that it is their personal responsibility to live a rule of life that sustains and restores God's creation. The changing climate is a call upon us to examine our impact on the environment – as individuals and as a community of faith with buildings.

66. **Empowerment:** There is also an opportunity for bishops to raise the consciousness of church members as well as the public. The Communion/Province should position itself to be a symbol for ecological commitment to sustaining and renewing God's creation. Dioceses and parishes provide opportunities for learning and action. People respond well to specific, simple actions, e.g. plant one tree each year, use no plastic in the churches, walk whenever you can instead of using a car. Bishops can also have specific actions, e.g. plant a tree on each parish visit, focus sermons for one season on the Environment. "Green Awards" are also incentives to dioceses and parishes to decrease the damage they do to creation and improve the ways they contribute to renewing the earth.

67. **Advocacy:** The Bishop is often in a position to make connections with levels of government and business where there are opportunities to advocate for change. Accurate information containing requests for specific actions must be at hand. As well the bishop can maintain ecumenical and interfaith connections in order to speak with

one voice to the powers. The Bishop is also often needed/wanted as a public figure to head up campaigns but these should be chosen keeping the suitability of the campaign.

68. Liturgy: The Communion and Diocesan worship committees can develop worship resources on creation and environmental themes, and use the liturgical seasons for environmental awareness, e.g. planting time and harvest thanksgiving, the memorial of St. Francis, a Lenten fast from energy consumption. Scripture that speaks to the integrity of creation can be identified in the Lectionary and support materials be made available for study and preaching. (e.g. Genesis 1:27,28, 29 or 9:11; psalm 8; John 1:1-3; Romans 8:18-21; Colossians 1:15-20)

69. Empowerment for Action: Think globally, act locally and globally. Work ecumenically and with other faith groups to lobby governments for laws and implementation of international agreements, e.g. Kyoto and Copenhagen 2009. The bishops could also have a reconciling role for brokering conversations between business, government and environmentalists. We must be aware of the political and economic aspects of caring for creation. Ecology and economics are connected. The desire for economic development can start a vicious cycle of damage to the environment. Damage to the environment creates conditions that impact developing nations and those living in poverty (women and children) first. Economic improvements for one group may bring environmental disaster to another. In many Provinces, this is especially true for Indigenous Peoples. Bishops need to learn how to exert pressure on governments in regard to environmental issues and this means they have to be correctly informed and have credibility with governments.

70. Environmental destruction is also connected to internal displacement of people and to migration. Sometimes the creation is deliberately destroyed by companies seeking access to resource, such as oil, and the local people are driven away. Sometimes, when the land is devastated by natural disaster, the people migrate seeking safety and a livelihood.

Initiatives

Green Conference: The next Lambeth Conference should be a green conference where the host institution is under clear direction from the Design Group to provide recycling facilities.

Follow up on the Lambeth Conference 1998's affirmation of the Millennium Development Goals, especially #7, "Ensure environmental sustainability". The Anglican Consultative Council 2009 should ask provinces to report on their work on Millennium Development Goal #7 towards sustaining and renewing the creation in 2012.

Resources

The plenary address of Professor Chris Rapley.

Anglican Communion Environmental Network <http://apjn.anglicancommunion.org>