

GAFCon Update – 24 June 2008

Bishop Nazir-Ali on authentic Anglicanism

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali (Rochester, UK) told GAFCON pilgrims yesterday that “the future of the Anglican Communion is to be found in its authentic nature, not in recent innovations or explanations.” That nature, he said, is submitted to the authority of scripture, confessing, and governed by councils with the ability and authority to lead the church and teach the Christian faith.



In a news conference that followed his lecture, Bishop Nazir-Ali, who has been a student of Islam for 30 years, clarified his earlier comment related to the Christian’s right to witness to Muslims. “Just as Muslims have a right to invite others to join Islam [referred to as Da’wa], Christians have a right to invite others to Jesus,” he said. He added that he would like to do other

things with Muslims, such as serving them in schools and hospitals.

Bishop Nazir-Ali completed his address with words of encouragement for GAFCON pilgrims. “If you are anything gathered here together, you are the beginnings, the miraculous beginnings, we may say, of an ecclesial movement for the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of Christ’s church.”

Churches respond to HIV/AIDS

In a seminar on the church’s response to HIV/AIDS, the Provinces of Uganda and Nigeria shared how they are working to limit new infections and care for those affected by the disease.

Keeping the Gospel message of transformation central is key to Uganda’s approach, said the Rev. Canon Aaron Mwesigye, provincial secretary for the Anglican Church of the Province of Uganda. Almost every diocese is directly engaged in fighting HIV/AIDS and its affects, he added.

Their efforts, with the efforts of many others, have been very successful. During the mid 1980’s as much as 30 percent of Uganda’s total population was infected with HIV/AIDS. By 2005 that figure had fallen dramatically to 6.7 percent.

Uganda achieved this significant decrease by focusing on supporting abstinence, said Canon Mwesigye. The church particularly participates in the effort by integrating HIV/AIDS prevention into every ministry of the church.

The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) is also deeply involved in combating AIDS/HIV. One such effort is centred in the Diocese of Jos in Plateau State. According to the Ven. Noel Bewarang, the diocese has particularly reached out to HIV/AIDS orphans and widows. “Nigeria is said to have the highest number of AIDS orphans in the world,” said Bewarang.

Primate of West Africa encourages conference

Archbishop Justus Akrofi, primate of the Anglican Church of West Africa, spoke yesterday on God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12, saying that the covenant with those that trust in the Living God should be a cause for confidence in the midst of the Anglican Communion’s present conflict.

“Faithfulness and obedience to the will of God are the needed ingredients...in the final analysis, God’s cause will prevail.”

Archbishop Akrofi encouraged GAFCON pilgrims to trust God with the task of setting the future direction of the movement. “Let us dare to move on and start the imagining of the end product... let us resist the temptation to play God’s secretaries.”



Media conference explores issues & theological education

Responding to a query from the international media about whether it is conscionable that “one narrow point should tear the church,” Bishop Bill Atwood of Kenya clarified that the real issues are: the identity of Jesus, the nature of salvation and the authority and application of Scripture.

The Rev. Cesar Guzman, of Chile, said that theological education is the church’s lifeline. David Short, rector of St. John’s, Shaughnessy, the largest Canadian Anglican church, said “...seminary has limitations. How do graduates minister? This cannot be learned at seminary, but outside, so we deal with character issues and theological mindset...The churches that teach the true Gospel can grow. but those that are losing numbers are the ones that are compromising.”



GAFCON pilgrims walk the Via Delarosa Tuesday

You can be in Jerusalem without leaving home...

GAFCON is receiving a lot of coverage in the international media – some fair, some down-right vitriolic. You can see what is really going on by watching some of the key actual conference sessions on the Internet. AnglicanTV (www.anglicantv.org) is covering the conference, with sessions posted to the website within hours. You can also link to AnglicanTV from the GAFCON website www.gafcon.org.

You can also see a number of brief videos on the Sydney Anglicans website that will give you a flavour of the conference – both of the people and the events:

www.sydneyan Anglicans.net/media/video/

In addition, you’ll find a lot of information coming from the conference on the GAFCON website. Several bloggers are here as well, including www.VirtueOnLine.org and www.StandFirmInFaith.com.