

## GAFCon update - 25 June 2008

### **Ophel Gardens pilgrimage**

Wednesday was a memorable day for GAFCON delegates with another powerful lineup of speakers, a visit to the first Anglican church in the Middle East and a historic pilgrimage to the Ophel Gardens – where Christ walked, the Apostle Peter possibly preached and early Christians were baptised.



Pilgrims first heard about the miraculous founding of Christ Church through the intervention of noted British Christian leaders, such as William Wilberforce, and the growing Messianic Jewish ministry, and then walked through the Old City of Jerusalem to the Ophel Gardens (temple steps). Once gathered on the ancient steps of the temple, the pilgrims were led in worship by the African Anglican Youth Choir from Uganda, singing 'Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great redeemer's praise'.

The Rev David Peleggi told the crowd of 1200 that this was the site of the events of Acts 2. Mr Raphael Ben-Hur, senior deputy director-general in the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, welcomed this first major gathering of Anglicans in Jerusalem and invited GAFCON to return next year. He also presented Archbishop Akinola with a pilgrim certificate, which will be given to all GAFCON pilgrims. Personalized certificates for Ugandan, Nigerian and Kenyan pilgrims have already been distributed and the rest are expected to be available for pick-up on Sunday.

Ben-Hur also presented gifts to two bishops' wives in apology for technical problems they had experienced at immigration.

### **The gospel and leadership**

In a news conference on Wednesday, Bishop Wallace Benn (Lewes, England), said canon law cannot be more important than apostolic witness. Bishop Benn has been co-leading a workshop series on the Gospel and Leadership together with Dr Christopher Kolade (Nigeria) and Bishop Stephen Mwangi (Kenya).

Explaining why he will not go to Lambeth, Bishop Benn said his conviction was that he was following the steps of Jesus, being gospel-focused and remaining faithful to apostolic teaching.

Speaking about the crisis of faith in the Communion, author and academic, Os Guinness, told the news conference that the departure from accepted Christian doctrine by the Episcopal Church in the US is a serious “test case” for faith in the 21st Century. He said that, “...people who come to faith from atheist or skeptic backgrounds come to the authentic faith, and not to the revisionist forms.”

Mrs Oluranti Ademowo, wife of the Bishop of Lagos gave the news conference a presentation on women’s ministry in Nigeria, which includes HIV/AIDS campaigns, visiting seniors, ministering to the needy, and evangelizing and disciplining youth.

### **The gospel and religion**

Yesterday evening, noted ecumenical scholar Dr Lamin Sanneh together with local Christian leaders Dr Salim Muyaner and the Rev Evan Thomas spoke about and modeled reconciliation through the Gospel.

Muyaner is the founder of Musalaha, a ministry of reconciliation that promotes reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, while Thomas is a member of Musalaha’s board and a leader of Israel’s Messianic Jewish community.

Sanneh, the D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity and professor of history at Yale Divinity School, suggested to pilgrims that destructive conflicts between Christians and Muslims are something that the world could do without.

Sanneh discussed the connection between language and religious belief. “There is nothing that God wants to say to us that is so profound, so elevated that it cannot be expressed in normal, everyday language to ordinary people.”

He also spoke in support of GAFCON. “GAFCON I am absolutely convinced... is part of the wave of the future. You in this community have a tremendous responsibility to link with movements that are also taking place in Europe and America. GAFCON will then create a family of God that transcends nationality and language.” Later, he added, “The Anglican Communion has to respond to GAFCON, not as a threat, but as an asset – work with it.”

## Redeemed to worship – the Rev David Short



God redeems us from enslavement to sin, not so we can do anything we like, but so that we may be free to serve Him as exemplified by the Exodus account. This was the core of the message at the Wednesday morning exposition by the Rev David Short, rector of St John's Shaughnessy, the largest Anglican congregation in Canada.

The book of Exodus, he said, is about God fulfilling His purpose and promise through redemption and deliverance. Redemption begins in slavery and ends in experiencing the glory of God – as does the book of Exodus.

God redeems us, said the Rev Short, so we can be free from slavery to sin, not free to do as we please. The Biblical gospel demands transformation. "Let my people go so they can worship Me." True freedom is freedom to obey God. If we replace redemption with tolerance as some do today, then it is no more a Gospel.

Photos from GAFCon

Photos have been added to the ANiC website – with more to come:  
[http://anglicannetwork.ca/gafcon\\_062208\\_photos.htm](http://anglicannetwork.ca/gafcon_062208_photos.htm)