



Streams in the Desert: A Letter from Churches in Restricted Situations

G19 Conference Statement

Dubai: 25th February – 1st March 2019

Preamble

1. We gathered together as the people of God, under the Word of God and aware of His presence and love for the whole of His creation (Matt 6:25 -29, Rom 8:20-23). Among us were 4 Primates, 31 bishops and archbishops, 44 clergy and 59 lay people from twelve countries.
2. We were grateful that the Global Anglican Future Conference (Gafcon) organised this gathering for Anglicans living in restricted circumstances who were not able to attend G18.
3. We met in the context of hostility between India and Pakistan; conflict in Sudan; a fragile peace in South Sudan, though some parts continue to face unrest; and the endemic violence between ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria.
4. We gave thanks to God, as we studied St Paul's letter to the Philippians and learned from the plenary addresses and from each other of the joys and challenges of sharing the gospel in our different contexts.
5. Gafcon is a movement for the reform and renewal of the Anglican Communion by faithful Anglicans who find their beloved Communion has been devastated by those preaching and practicing another gospel (Gal 1:6-7).
6. As an expression of such faithfulness, we commend the Letter to the Churches written by our brothers and sisters at Gafcon 2018.

Called to proclaim the gospel faithfully

"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!" (Philippians 4:1)

7. As faithful Anglicans, the love of God and His gospel is at the heart of who we are and what we do. We give thanks for the opportunity we have had to join with brothers and sisters in shared fellowship. Our week together has confirmed our shared appreciation of, and submission to, God's revelation of himself through Scripture to which, by the grace of God, we seek to hold, even in the most adverse situations.

8. We shared in the joy and suffering faced by many of our brothers and sisters living in restricted situations as they seek to remain faithful to Christ.
9. We heard of the sense of betrayal they experience when the very gospel for which they are suffering is being undermined and denied in other parts of the Anglican Communion. It grieves us that those who reject the clarity and authority of the Scriptures, the universal teaching of the Church, the classical Anglican formularies and the decisions of the Lambeth Conference undermine the credibility of our witness amongst our fellow citizens of other faiths and of none.

We respectfully continue to urge that all faithful Anglican provinces, including the Anglican Church in North America and the Anglican Province of Brazil, be invited to future Anglican gatherings.

At the same time, we ask that those provinces, bishops and clergy who, in word or action, openly disregard the teaching of the Church as described, for example, by Resolution I:10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, should not be invited unless they repent of their actions and their consequences.

Called to proclaim hope

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. (Philippians 1:12)

10. We recognise that, despite the very different contexts in which we live, our fundamental need is the same; that is, each of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and of his purposes for us in our creation. We give thanks that the atonement provided by Christ's death and the new life springing from His resurrection fully meets that need. We commit ourselves to sharing this Good News, in word and in deed, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
11. We learned from different models of mission and ministry that were appropriate to our different contexts.
12. We were gladdened to hear that people are turning to Christ from every tribe, language and nation represented at the conference, even in the most difficult circumstances. Our worship reflected our cultural and linguistic diversity and the unity that results from our common submission to God's revelation in Christ.

We are encouraged that the faithful suffering of God's people has indeed served to proclaim the gospel to the world. We ask that the testimony of endurance and joyful resilience of the suffering Church be at the heart of our life and work together in the Communion, so that there may be blessing for Anglicans worldwide.

Called to partner together

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-6)

13. We grieve that the fellowship in the Anglican Communion has been torn at the deepest level by those who preach another gospel and those who urge us to continue to 'walk together' with them. We are grateful, therefore, that Gafcon offers us the opportunity to partner with one another in true gospel fellowship. As the Chairman of the Gafcon Primates pointed out in his address, the continued development of the nine networks is one way one in which this can take place:

- Theological Education: To promote effective theological training throughout the Anglican Communion.
- Church Planting: To expand church planting as a global strategy for evangelization and discipleship.
- Global Mission Partnerships: To promote strategic cross-cultural mission partnerships in a globalised world.
- Youth and Children's Ministry: To be a catalyst for mission to young people and children of all nations so that they may become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Women's Ministry: To promote biblical patterns of marriage and family life, especially through the worldwide Mother's Union.
- Sustainable Development: To establish global partnerships which work with the local church to bring sustainable and transformative development.
- Bishops' Training Institute: To serve the formation of faithful and effective episcopal leadership throughout the Communion.
- Lawyers Task Force: To address issues of religious freedom and matters of concern to Anglican lawyers and Chancellors and to further the aims of the Jerusalem Declaration.

- Prayer: To equip faithful Anglicans around the world to pray for the renewal and reform of the Communion and to develop globally connected regional and national intercessory prayer networks.
14. We look forward to seeing these networks provide fellowship and resources for faithful churches who have to refuse help which comes with an ungodly agenda that might, therefore, compromise their integrity.

We recommend that the Gafcon Primates consider appropriate ways to discern and nurture the particular gifts and ministries of women and men, so that they may play their part in the life of their churches.

We request that the Gafcon Primates consider developing a new network to provide fellowship, advocacy and intentional prayer for those in restricted situations and ask that all the other networks consider the particular needs of our persecuted brothers and sisters, ensuring that the gifts God has given them are used throughout our Communion.

Conclusion

¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.
(Philippians 3:17-21)

15. We were encouraged by the presence of the Primate of All Nigeria, the Primate of South Sudan, the Primate of the Anglican Church in North America, the Moderator of the Church of Bangladesh, and many senior bishops, including the Archbishop of Jos, the new General Secretary of Gafcon, together representing the vast majority of faithful Anglicans.
16. As St Paul says, our persecuted brothers and sisters give us an example of those who live the apostolic life in faithfulness to Christ, with God-given joy and perseverance, in the face of threats within and without (cf. Philippians 3:17).
17. We pray that, by God's grace, their example will also maintain us in faithfulness to the gospel, prophetic witness, love of God and our fellow brothers and sisters, as we eagerly await the return of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is our prayer that our love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that we may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (cf. Philippians 1:9-11)