

Lambeth 2022
August 2022 Pastoral Letter
from the Bishop of Ely and the Bishop of Huntingdon

10 August 2022

*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*
1 Peter 2:10

Dear friends,

Like last time, the majority of this letter corresponds to the text of the letter which is also being issued to the Diocese of Lincoln. It makes sense while I am bishop of both dioceses. Bishop Dagmar, sadly, is poorly with Covid, but joins me in writing to you.

We are writing to you to begin to share our experience of the 15th Lambeth Conference of the bishops of the Anglican Communion. In doing so, we are conscious that the Conference only ended on Sunday: we have much to reflect on. We are also conscious that we wrote to you on 25th July, just as the Conference was about to begin, on the subject of the Lambeth Calls that were to replace the Resolutions of previous Conferences, and on the Call on Human Dignity in particular. Some of you have written to us following that Pastoral Letter, and we are grateful for the conversations that these messages and emails have opened up and will continue to engender. Conversation has been central to what we have been doing during our time in Canterbury in the Conference itself.

We are tired at the end of a packed programme, but each of us has found the Conference to have been a holy and transforming gift in which we made friends and heard stories of witness and mission across the whole world. Our experience has been one of joy, sorrow, friendship, vibrant worship, deep listening, empathy with those parts of the Church who experience profound suffering in many different (yet often surprisingly similar) ways and expanding understandings as we bear one another's burdens. The best part of the Conference was the daily Bible Study on I Peter in small groups of bishops from around the world in which we western bishops were properly in the minority. Honesty and trust blossomed as individual bishops found their voice and spoke from love, not fear. It was moving to hear from bishops serving the Global World who committed to coming to Lambeth for the sake of the unity of the Anglican Communion. It was sad to hear how donor funding from any source can be weaponised. This reinforced the Ely decision only ever to engage in equal partnerships which are rooted in the common cause of mission, and not money.

The Lambeth Calls on Mission and Evangelism, Safe Church, Anglican Identity, Reconciliation, Human Dignity, Environment and Sustainable Development, Christian Unity, Inter-faith Relations, Discipleship and Science and Faith each contain important recommendations that we bring back to the Diocese of Ely and that will help us to continue to shape our life together, as part of the Church of England and the wider Communion, over the coming years. Early in the Conference, Archbishop Stephen of York spoke movingly about the urgency of evangelism and mission in our own contexts. This is a vital

message to us in Ely as we focus on our deanery development plans. It was a profound joy that the preacher at the opening service was an African woman, the Bishop of Lesotho.

During our time in Canterbury, with our sister and brother bishops, we spent a significant amount of time discussing and sharing these Calls in the light of our contexts. We experienced genuine interest in how climate change here is affecting farmers in the East of England and found much common ground with colleagues in Bangladesh and South Sudan on this issue, as we did from people who did not realise that we, too, face the risk of inundation and the reversal of the drainage of the fens which we take for granted. All the Calls have been at the core of the Bible studies as well as the discussions at our table groups.

We recognise that there has been some media interest in the Conference as a whole and in all the Calls, but that most comment, whether in the online world or the traditional media, has been with regard to the discussion on Human Dignity. Indeed, it was this Call that was at the centre of our previous Pastoral Letter, and we believe that the concerns that we shared in that Letter were borne out by events. As bishops of the whole flock of Christ, there are times when it is important to speak for one more immediately vulnerable part of the flock than the rest. The virtual postbag of messages we have received contained a range of views expressed with integrity and courtesy, the significant majority grateful for what we said. A huge amount of prayer and work was undertaken in the first ten days of the Conference which brought us to the profound and moving letter and consequent speech delivered to the Bishops by Archbishop Justin.

Deep difference remains on matters of sexuality, but we discern a serious commitment to listening and walking together in spite of the differences to the maximum possible degree - and to continuing to learn about each others' views, understanding of Scripture, and deeply grounded theology.

It is very important to stress that the Conference did not reaffirm, and was not asked to reaffirm, Lambeth Resolution 1.10, which still stands as an authentic Resolution of Lambeth 1998.

The Archbishop addressed us all before we had discussion round tables:

- <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/lambeth-call-human-dignity-read-archbishop-justins-remarks>

He also wrote to us all:

- <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/letter-archbishop-canterbury-bishops-anglican-communion>

It is important to read these two documents together.

He emphasised that we minister in very different social and cultural contexts. The Call as received states: (2.3) "Many Provinces continue to affirm that same gender marriage is not permissible... Other Provinces have blessed and welcomed same sex union/marriage, after careful theological reflection and a process of reception."

Archbishop Justin underlined these two situations and stressed that both attend carefully to Scripture and do not reject Christ:

“For the large majority of the Anglican Communion the traditional understanding of marriage is something that is understood, accepted and without question, not only by Bishops but their entire Church, and the societies in which they live. For them, to question this teaching is unthinkable, and in many countries would make the church a victim of derision, contempt and even attack. For many churches to change traditional teaching challenges their very existence.

“For a minority, we can say almost the same. They have not arrived lightly at their ideas that traditional teaching needs to change. They are not careless about scripture. They do not reject Christ. But they have come to a different view on sexuality after long prayer, deep study and reflection on understandings of human nature. For them, to question this different teaching is unthinkable, and in many countries is making the church a victim of derision, contempt and even attack. For these churches not to change traditional teaching challenges their very existence.”

He went on to say: “I neither have, nor do I seek, the authority to discipline or exclude a church of the Anglican Communion. I will not do so.” and on other occasions spoke during the Conference about deep disagreement being held in the context of overwhelming self-giving love.

While we may have some reservation about parts of this analysis (for example, we consider there to be plurality of views across the Anglican Communion, irrespective of geography) we offer these words to you because we see in them a source of hope.

We recognise that the discussion about Human Dignity has caused pain to many, especially because of the controversy about the wording of the Call that we sought to explain in our previous Letter. Those who have been hurt very much include the LGBTQI+ community, but also those who seek a clearer expression of what they consider to be the teaching of the Church by its leaders. It is important to note that LGBTQI+ voices were heard during the Conference, and listened to, alongside the fullest expression of concern for the maintenance of the Church’s traditional teaching on Christian marriage, not least as it applies in the Church of England. Some have commented that Church of England bishops have remained largely silent about Human Dignity and have reacted in different ways to this perceived silence. We would like to assure you that, in our particular styles, and from our own perspectives, all the Ely and Lincoln bishops contributed fully (and, we hope, respectfully and lovingly) to the conversations that took place on this Call during the Conference.

The Church of England is now entering the final phase of Living in Love and Faith (LLF). During the autumn and into the spring of 2023, the bishops will be meeting to pray, study the Scriptures and reflect on the outcomes of the different surveys and participant responses from the LLF course that so many people in the Diocese of Ely and across the whole Church have offered.

We believe that during the Lambeth Conference Archbishop Justin laid out a basis on which we can move forward as a Church. In the light of our discussions about human dignity and sexuality in Canterbury we wish to affirm and celebrate the gift of LGBTQI+

people in and for the church. God's love embraces all. We declare again our condemnation of all forms of homophobia. And we wish to affirm that, as bishops, we remain committed to listening and walking together despite the church's deep disagreement on these issues. We therefore also affirm and celebrate the presence of and contribution to the Church of those who, in the words of one of our correspondents 'teach the orthodox doctrines of the faith in matters of sexuality, marriage and relationships'. The track record over the last twelve years in Ely in offering continuous support for growing conservative churches and their sacrificial ministry is not going to diminish. Every human being is made in the image of God and is worthy of respect and love.

For all these reasons, we are fully committed to the ongoing process of LLF this autumn and to the listening and discernment in which we are called to share.

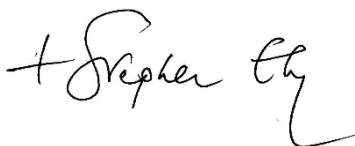
The writer of 1 Peter, which we studied during our time in Canterbury, preceded the verse that introduced this Letter with these words: 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.' (1 Peter 1.9)

1 Peter tells of those who live in difficult times, but who find identity and purpose in Christ. As we contemplate our world, with all its challenges, we acknowledge that we certainly live in difficult times. However, we are equally confident of the grace, love and hope that is to be found in Christ, and that is expressed in so many different ways in the life of God's people in the Diocese of Ely.

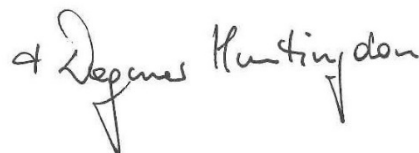
We are humbled to serve as your bishops, and very grateful to you for your prayerful support, both during our time in Canterbury and continuously through the years of our partnership in the gospel.

Please have as restful a summer as possible. I am now on holiday in Northumberland. I am sorry if individual or group messages to us do not receive a reply before early September, or receive replies which are not physically signed in our usual way.

Yours ever in Christ,



The Rt Revd Stephen Conway
Bishop of Ely



The Rt Revd Dr Dagmar Winter
Bishop of Huntingdon