



Rev. James de
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The FCA Leadership Conference

James de Costobadie reports back on the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCA) Leadership Conference earlier this year in London, where two hundred ordained and lay leaders from around the globe met together to study the scriptures and encourage one another.

The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCA) is the movement that has evolved out of Gafcon (the Global Anglican Future Conference) which met in June 2008. During 23 –27 April 2012 the FCA held a leaders conference in London at which thirty countries and twenty five (out of thirty eight) Anglican Provinces were represented by two hundred leaders, ordained and lay, men and women. Five people attended from New Zealand, including Bishops Richard Ellena (Nelson) and Gabriel Sharma (Fiji).

The theme of the conference was Jesus the Christ: Unique and Supreme. Outsiders might assume that such a conference is dominated by strategy and scheming. This conference was dominated by Christ and the Scriptures.

Each day began with excellent bible readings from Colossians, where the glory of Jesus as the King both of creation and of the new Creation was held up for all to see. Any Christianity which reduces or sidelines him deliberately or inadvertently inevitably ends up with a lifeless husk.

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There was robust theology, highlighted in a majestic talk by Rev Dr. Mike Ovey who spoke on the uniqueness of Christ in revelation, creation and redemption. We were reminded that method is as important as result – it is not good enough simply to believe certain things because

they have been passed on by our forefathers. We believe them rather because the Son who has unique access to the Father has taught them through his Word, and who are we to think we know better than the Son?

In the afternoon seminars covered topics such as theological education, the nature and history of the church, evangelism, leadership and church-planting. This was a conference with a positive agenda to bring encouragement from the Scriptures and from the wisdom of leaders from around the Communion who spoke.

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The theological contributions of the conference were therefore buttressed with personal glimpses of what our brothers and sisters endure in different parts of the world.

We received from Anglican leaders accounts of terrorism leading to death and destruction in Nigeria, and of persecution and ostracism of believers in Islamic and Hindu societies; we heard from a Christian pro-life and pro-marriage advocate who has been maligned by the secular media in England, with precious little support from the Church establishment. We also heard numerous accounts from Anglican leaders around the world who have been harassed by their own bishops and fellow clergy for their gospel witness, yet have been grateful for the stance of the FCA.

It was noted that The Episcopal Church (TEC) USA and the Anglican Church of Canada are proceeding post-haste to approve same-sex blessing rites with total disregard for the conscience of their own members, for the moratoria mandated by the official Instruments of the Anglican Communion, and for the broken state of communion where more than half the world's Anglicans are represented by the FCA.

Such personal accounts help to explain why the FCA exists. Its first goal is missional – the proclamation and defence of the gospel throughout the world. The second goal is to provide aid to those faithful Anglicans who have been forced to disaffiliate from their original spiritual homes by false teaching and practice.

It is these two goals that dominate the focus and energy of the FCA and it is important to state this clearly as misinformation surrounds it. The FCA is not aggressive or seeking to cause splits within the Communion; it does not concern any matters where there has been agreed-upon diversity within our Anglican unity; it does not have anything to do with women's roles as priests or bishops, and it may not be said to have a chiefly negative agenda.

Rather our concern remains the name and message of our Lord. The gospel must be protected and proclaimed, and we must maintain close fellowship with and support those who would seek to do this in the face of a revisionist agenda.

This is a very live issue for us in New Zealand: the Diocesan synods of Auckland and Waiapu have already approved either the ordination of persons in same sex relationships, or the blessing of same sex unions, or both. Moreover the Standing Committee of General Synod has passed a decision, as reported in Taonga news (12 July 2011), to "declare a timetable for deciding the question of whether openly gay and lesbian people should be ordained as Anglican priests." That timetable appears to set mid-2014 as the date for a final decision.

In the light of this the fellowship and support offered by FCA is likely to grow in importance in the coming period for those in New Zealand who wish to continue in the line of orthodox

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Anglicans who have proclaimed and defended the Gospel for over 400 years.

It was comforting to be reminded at the conference that the majority of the world's Anglicans continue to hold to these beliefs. Those who insist on splitting from this by promoting a revisionist theology are surely leading their people up a cul-de-sac which will never lead to the life that can only exist in the Kingdom of God. It is our responsibility, Archbishop Eliud Wabukala urged us, to walk humbly with our God, following the Scriptures and seeking a unity with love only in the truth He has declared.